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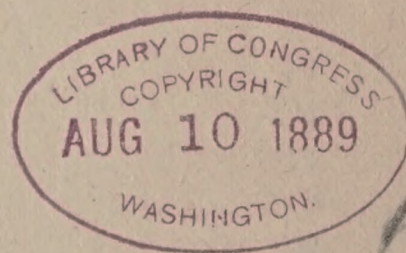
THROUGH LOVE TO LIFE

L L

A Novel

✓
BY GILLAN VASE

40
*A novel is a subjective epopee, wherein the author
begs permission to treat the world after his fashion:
the question therefore is, has he a fashion? the rest
will attend to itself.—GOETHE*



NEW YORK
HARPER & BROTHERS, FRANKLIN SQUARE
1889

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THROUGH JOYE TO LIFE

II. JOYE

BY ALLAN JAMES

NEW YORK

HARTER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS

1880

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. ROWS	1
II. MY FIRST LOVE	7
III. A COMMON PERSON BENEATH CRITICISM	14
IV. BALLYACORA HALL	18
V. LIFE AND ITS ATTRACTIONS.	24
VI. PRINCE AND DAME DE COMPAGNIE	29
VII. UN GRAND PETIT HOMME	33
VIII. GRACIEUSE	37
IX. A CÔTELETTE, A CAT, AND A CAPTAIN	42
X. JOSEF AUFDERMAUER	48
XI. THE REASON WHY	53
XII. THE FÖHN	60
XIII. A NEW THÉRÈSE	64
XIV. MY LITTLE MISTRESS	69
XV. THÉRÈSE	77
XVI. A SOLEMN VOW	84
XVII. IN THE SCHENKSTUBE	86
XVIII. A BLOW FOR A KISS	98
XIX. UNSOLVED PROBLEMS	97
XX. PROSIT!	104
XXI. "DOWN TO PENZANCE"	111
XXII. A LION IN THE WAY	117
XXIII. AS A WOMAN	122
XXIV. A LETTER	129
XXV. LETTER NUMBER TWO	133
XXVI. AILEEN	136
XXVII. A LIVE LORD	150
XXVIII. PETER'S NICK	163
XXIX. MY MOTHER—THE WIND	173
XXX. TAKEN TO TASK	179

CHAPTER	PAGE
XXXI. "BIM, BIM, BIM!" SAID THE BELL	186
XXXII. HE AND SHE AGAIN	193
XXXIII. AN INEVITABLE ROAD	203
XXXIV. IN SCHLOSS MANDELSLOH	209
XXXV. LOUIS L'ANGLAIS	219
XXXVI. A SMALL HOUSE AT CLAPHAM	231
XXXVII. A MARRIAGE AND A RENUNCIATION	244
XXXVIII. POOR MABEL!	259
XXXIX. AN ENGLISH PROPHETESS AND A SWISS PROFESSORESS	267
XL. HUMBLE PIE	273
XLI. COALS OF FIRE	279
XLII. A MOTHERLESS BABE	282
XLIII. TWO BROTHERS	291
XLIV. MRS. OR MISS SMITH	300
XLV. A DESERTED HOUSE	302
XLVI. THE SISTER EVELINE	311
XLVII. A MOMENTOUS QUESTION	318
XLVIII. "WHITHER THOU GOEST, I WILL GO."	325
XLIX. 27 SPINSTER LANE, CLAPHAM	332
L. THE VOICE OF SOCIETY	338

THROUGH LOVE TO LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

ROWS.

"I spell my name with the Y."—ESMOND.

It was a quarter to seven when the row began—just before dinner-time.

Notice that I say *the* row. A row was as common in our house as—say, in Ireland, or in the Chamber of Deputies in France. A row wouldn't have been worth recording.

But this row taught me two or three things which I never afterwards forgot.

Is it not something for a man to learn—a man *in futuro*, for I had been but recently breeched—that woman is as *false* as she is *fair*? and that fathers and mothers may be—well, never mind what!

I was in the hall. Let me confess the truth. I had been robbing my parents of sundry pears and sundry bunches of grapes, and conscience had driven me into a recess behind a naked and extremely chubby boy in white marble, who was always aiming at every one who passed him with a bow and arrow. Down behind him I crouched, waiting for an opportunity to escape.

I was rather interested in this boy, for mamma's friends used to say that I was very like him (when mamma was there), and used to poke their fingers in my cheeks, and pull my curls, and call me "a little love," and ask me how many *I* meant to shoot when I began.

I wondered how many *he* shot. I never saw him hit anybody

myself, but Thérèse, mamma's French maid, said he did sometimes. And she was all dimples and white teeth when I asked her, and sobbing before she had answered, her pretty hand upon her bosom as if a sudden pain had sprung up there and was more than she could bear.

"Did he ever hit you, Thérèse?" I asked.

"Hit me? Oh, but he is foolish, the little one! He is always hitting me, my little monsieur."

"When, Thérèse?"

"All the days, *petit*. When men smile at me, and they do sometimes, why I—I feel a pain here, and that is his arrow."

She was showing all her pearls again.

"Does he hit you when I put my arms round your neck and tell you that I love you better than any one in the world?—no, not better than my nurse," I added, with a great feeling of compunction.

"See how he knows already how to make love, the little one," laughed Thérèse. "Wait till you are a man, *mon enfant*, and break hearts then."

"Is it good to break hearts? Papa whips me sometimes when I break other things."

"Good? I do not know. It is very easy and *bien drôle*; funny, you call it; and it makes you laugh, and the other cry. That is why I laugh and cry and sing and dance: Tra, la, la, la, la. *L'amour*—But what can a *bébé* like you know about love?"

Very little, I dare say. But, as she laughed, I felt a sharp, sharp pain in the spot where my heart went pit-a-pat, keen as an arrow. I looked up in sudden passion to the marble image, still levelling his bow—yet with a difference. Some effect of falling light or shade had changed his arch smile into a cruel sneer.

Having introduced you to Thérèse, let me go back to the row.

From my hiding-place I had a good view of the staircase, and could also see every door leading into the hall. To my right was my father's room, the oaken door hidden behind another covered with baize which swung to and fro on noiseless hinges. Beyond that was the dining-room, its door slightly ajar, as I had left it when I had fled before William and the butler with

my booty. For I had been tempted down into these lower regions as our first mother was tempted—by lust after forbidden fruit.

I was looking earnestly into this room in order to take advantage of the first opportunity for escape. The butler's calm face was discomposed; he had found out the disarrangement of his dishes, and was, no doubt, inwardly swearing revenge. I watched him repair the breaches I had made, noiselessly putting the master-touch to the *tout ensemble*, while William stood at his side, possibly profiting from the lesson he was receiving, but with a far-away look in his honest blue eyes and a pallor over his usually ruddy cheek, hardly like the visible and outward signs of inward satisfaction.

"The de'il tak' him," muttered the butler, who was a Scotchman; "my finest pears and juiciest bunch of grapes!"

Of course. Did he think I'd risk my reputation for nothing?

"Cruel and heartless," murmured William, "and yet so pretty, so pretty."

I was a pretty boy—I had been told that many and many a time (by mamma's friends principally)—but *cruel* and *heartless*! O'ho, William, look out for nips!"

And then they turned together, and my opportunity was come.

But no! a footfall on the stairs. A sweet, saucy face appearing above the banister. I slunk back again into my corner. I couldn't trust Thérèse. She might connive at my escape or might betray me, just according to her humor.

Her humor was dangerous now. Her eyelids were reddened, and in the centre of each pale cheek burned a crimson spot; yet out of her brown eyes flashed a light so intense that the staircase seemed illuminated with it, and her mouth was wreathed with dimples. Somebody had angered Thérèse, and somebody was going to get punished for it.

She came down the broad oaken steps slowly; her shapely little head erect and haughty, her smiling lips quivering a little. As she passed the statue behind which I was crouching, she turned her sparkling eyes full upon it, clenched her little fist, and laughed. Then more quickly, and with an air of passionate resolution, she passed on to my father's room, pulled open the baize-covered door, and rapped sharply upon the oaken one behind it—once, twice.

My father himself appeared in answer to the summons.

As she raised her beautiful, agitated face to his red, pompous, overbearing one, I felt rather than saw that a second spectator had appeared upon the scene. A second heart began to beat in quick unison with mine.

"What is it?" said my father.

"It is madame who has bidden me to go," answered the girl, sobbing. "It is madame who has raised the foot to kick me out of the house. Is it that I am a slave to lick the dust at madame's bidding? I am come to say my adieux to monsieur. *Je m'en vais.*"

"No, you don't," said my father.

"I am sensible of the kindness of monsieur," continued Thérèse; "I have a heart—I. And then *le petit* will cry after me. But I have my honor, too, and 'slut' and 'hussy' are words that stick like pitch and burn like fire. *Je m'en vais.*"

As she uttered these words for the second time, the shadow of a sound fell over my ears and deafened them. Was it Eros himself crying out in tones of smothered agony: "Thérèse! Thérèse! Mamsell Thérèse!"

I saw my father's arm around her waist, and her face raised to his with a maddening look upon it—a look full of simulated coyness and sly invitation, and then—

And then the grapes in my hand turned sour as vinegar, and the pears in my trousers pockets heavy as lead.

The row was at its fiercest when I became conscious of it. There was a rustle of silken skirts, a stamping of heavy feet, hoarse threatenings, and through all, the sharp sound of a woman's voice, envenomed with bitter sarcasm and biting innuendo. It ended with the usual wind-up of hysterics, during which my mother was carried away prostrate.

Yet, though she fasted and my father dined, the victory was hers, and I knew it as well as any one.

I was no longer afraid of discovery. Pain had driven out fear. I walked boldly into the dining-room, and, sitting down in a corner half hidden by a heavy silken curtain, watched my father dine. The butler watched him too, and so did William.

He didn't seem to enjoy his dinner much, I thought. He took it, as I took medicine, in great gulps, washing all down with copious draughts of wine. Once he broke out into a furi-

ous passion, dashing a full wineglass on to the table, and staining the white damask deep red with its contents.

The dinner was over at last. It seemed a long time before the butler and William went away, but they went finally. And then he gave up trying to seem not to care. He leaned his head upon his hand, so that I could see the silver threads running through his hair, and groaned, and struck the table with his fist, until all the crystal on it trembled.

I had been feeling towards him like a judge towards a criminal; now my mind suddenly changed its attitude. We were both wrongdoers and both suffering.

"Papa!" I said; "papa!"

He looked up with a start; then his blood-shot eyes brightened, the heavy frown passed away from his forehead, and his lips parted to a smile.

"Hoighty-toighty!" he said; "you there, little mannikin?"

We were both wrongdoers and both suffering, nevertheless I had a burning word to say, and meant to say it. Yet my resolution was faltering fast. He was looking at me with a piteous longing in his eyes—a longing I knew how to interpret. He was not over-sensitive, but the sharp, bitter words of his wife might have wounded a tougher-skinned nature even than his, and he was bleeding inwardly. He wanted a morsel of the only cure for heart-wounds. He was hungering for a fragment of love.

Yet I hung back still, even though he put out both red, hard, beringed hands, and would fain have drawn me to his knee.

"Have a drop of wine, my boy?"

Child-like, I abandoned the weapon I held to grasp the one he offered. I cried out in a passion, born of the conflict within me.

"It is wine makes you so red and ugly, and I hate it."

He half rose and clenched his fist. I drew back, involuntarily ducking my head to avoid the blow I expected.

But he only laughed, repeating my words as if they had been a joke.

"Makes me red and ugly, does it? Very well, you sha'n't have wine if you don't like it. You shall have some figs. Ring the bell and bid the lazy brutes bring you some figs."

"I don't want anything to eat, papa. I only want to tell you—"

"Well?"

"That—"

"Well?"

"That—" And in spite of all my efforts I burst out a-crying.

"Good gracious, what's the matter? Tell me what it is, my boy. Everything I have is yours. I've been working all my life that you may have everything you want."

"But I want—"

"Speak out, don't be afraid."

A certain sense of childish dignity came now to my aid. I wiped my eyes, drew up my head, straightened my back, and spoke out like a man:

"I want Thérèse. I love her. I shall be a man some day, and I am going to marry her."

If I had sprung up suddenly into a man before his eyes, he could not have looked more confounded. Then the humor of the thing struck him. He burst into a loud fit of laughter, and laughed until the tears ran down his cheeks.

"You are beginning early, young man."

I resented his ridicule almost as much as I had resented the foregoing insult. There was no danger of my crying now. My heart was swelling high, but it was with pride and indignation. My body seemed to swell with it.

"And I don't want—I don't *choose*," I added, haughtily, "that any one shall kiss her but me. William is only a servant. *You* have got mamma, and ought to be content."

My argument was simple and childlike enough. But it led him back into the old track, wherein his soul had been wandering so drearily. He seemed to forget—he might well forget—that he was speaking to a child.

"Yes," he repeated, "I've got mamma, and I ought to be content. And she's no French adventuress, come from nowhere, and owned by nobody, but a baronet's daughter, and I ought to be more than content. And she leads me the life of a—a baronet's daughter's husband, and I ought to be most content. So I am! So I am!"

But he looked like a wild and furious animal as he got up and paced the room, and he looked like an animal bruising its

head against the bars of its cage when he brought his fist again into thundering contact with the mahogany.

"I was once an adventurer myself," he continued, "and might have been a different man if she—I mean, I might have remained one of a beggarly lot. But now I'm Charles Smythe, Esquire—with the Y, remember! And they know me well on 'Change. And I could buy up hundreds of pauper baronets and bankrupt lords. And I'm a greater man than I ever hoped to be. And I ought to be content. Good God! so I am!"

He had forgotten that I was there until he caught sight of me, pale and terror-stricken.

"Go back to your nurse," he cried, like a man beside himself, "and learn from her to be a better man than your father."

CHAPTER II.

MY FIRST LOVE.

"Aber die Natur behauptet mit Nachdruck ihre Rechte, und da sie niemals willkürlich fordert, so nimmt sie, unbefriedigt, auch keine Forderung zurück."

SCHILLER (*Anmuth and Würde*).

NOTWITHSTANDING my opposition, and notwithstanding my father's, Thérèse had to go the next day, and, to add to my bewilderment and dismay and despair, William went with her.

There had been a deep, deep reason for that indignant clause in my reproach to my father: "William is only a servant"—a reason so profound that my childish brain only just perceived, and had not yet grasped and defined, it. Surely *he* could not be my rival—he, the only man in the house who ever found fault with Thérèse, the only one who never told her how light her step was, nor how glossy her wavy hair, nor how bright were her dark eyes, nor how round and smooth her neck, nor how enchanting her dimples. Other men said these things, for the saying of which I cordially hated them (I felt, but could not express), and only William never did.

Yet a secret instinct showed me that his blame meant more than their praise, his pained look of disapproval more than their flattery. Sometimes, behind her back, these sycophants would

laugh at Thérèse, calling her a spoiled chit, a minx, a heartless French coquette, and the like, while William would keep indignant silence or break out into indignant defence, always saying that she was a deal better—a thousand times better—than she would appear.

And once I was witness to a scene between these two which tended to make my fleeting impression into a permanent, yet still incomprehensible, one.

It was evening, I remember, and my nurse was putting my little sisters to bed, while I was intent on finishing a second Tower of Babel. I was alone in the day nursery, laying my bricks to the time of a tune my nurse was humming in the room adjoining, and wondering as I built which voice was the sweeter—hers or Thérèse's, and which of the two I really loved the best.

Thinking of Thérèse, I began to fancy I could hear her light step on the landing outside, a heavier one following it. I put down the brick in my hand and listened intently; and now I distinctly heard a low, sweet, mocking laugh and a scuffle; then a cry of anger.

I ran to the door, opened it and looked out.

I knew it was Thérèse, yet it was not William whom I had expected to see beside her, nor had I ever fancied *him* with his arm around her waist and his hand close to her crimson cheek.

“Has he been beating you, Thérèse?” I asked.

She was laughing, showing all her white teeth and dimples as she pushed him from her, yet for all that she was in a furious passion, her eyes flashing, and her bodice rising and falling like the waves of an angry sea.

“Has he been beating you?” I repeated, in my wisdom and knowledge of human nature, and I ran to stroke her red cheek and lay my own against it.

“Yes, he has, he has!” she cried, violently, pushing me from her, striking the air with her outstretched hands, and all in a tremble from head to foot. “He has no right to do it. I’m not a nun to be shut up in a convent. I’m not eighty yet, to have done with life and be ready to die. I’m only a girl, and I want pleasure and sweetness and freedom. I will have what I want. I will, I will!”

It was odd to see how rapidly her speech passed on into ac-

tion, and how emphatic the action made her words. When she spoke of not being a nun, she drew her white apron over her head and across her dimpled chin, making you scorn the absurd idea with herself. When comparing her own blooming youth to eighty, she wrinkled her smooth forehead, humped her straight back, and drew in her full red lips, shocking you almost as much as if the simulated change had been real. When she declared that she would have enjoyment and sweetness and liberty, she had raised her longing eyes and parted her coral lips as if about to taste heavenly nectar. With that bright flush upon her usually pale cheek she had looked then like a female Dionysus—goddess of pleasure and the lust of it.

I turned angrily towards William. How could I know, child that I was, whether she were claiming a divine right or stretching forth impious hands to clutch a gift from the altar? I only knew that she was beautiful, that her beauty made my heart ache, and every fibre in me vibrate, and that I loved her.

I turned towards William and saw in his face the same feeling animating mine, only intensified. For while in me it was as childlike as my body, in him it was in the full strength of its manhood.

“Thérèse, Thérèse!” he cried; “Mamsell Thérèse!”

I faltered. I still propounded the foolish question upon my lips, but I did so now fully conscious that the answer would be beyond me.

“Why did you beat Thérèse?” I asked. “How dared you beat her?”

Before he could answer, a gentle but firm summons to my nursery forced me to give up the riddle or find an answer to it myself. But before leaving the two I saw a sight which so complicated it that I was forced to abandon the idea of a solution in despair.

I saw that incomprehensible Thérèse, who had been twisting the corner of her white apron into a hard knot and mercilessly lashing her pretty fingers with the same, suddenly dart forward, throw herself upon her knees before the footman, and, taking his hard hand, press it to her lips. Then she vanished down the staircase, leaving William still standing there, like a huge image carved in stone.

Heighho! There are things in this world hard to understand!

It was the day after the row that William and Thérèse came together into my nursery to say good-bye to me and to my nurse.

Oh, that nursery, wherein much bread was cast upon the waters, many good seeds sown, which seemed long lost among the tares, but which, I humbly hope, eventually bore some good fruit—I can fancy myself there again, high up among the chimney-pots, and see again its one smoke-stained window looking out upon them, its one solitary unframed print representing the rich man feasting with his boon companions and sick Lazarus at his gates, its one worn leather-covered easy-chair, wherein sat the house's guardian angel—the one righteous being, I have since thought, who saved us from destruction!

For the weather outside in the dark heart of the city of London was not more unpleasantly variable than was the weather within. Inside, too, there was the change from storm to apathetic calm, from darkness unrelieved to darkness visible, from falling rain to fog impenetrable. Two things we never had—the bow of hope and the sunshine; or, rather, only in that one warm heart, where they were no flitting lodgers, but perpetual inmates.

It was a wild and stormy day in late autumn when Thérèse went away. A fierce, dry wind was raging through the city, making the windows rattle again and bringing clouds of dust against our house. Inside there had been a fresh row, and some of its angry breath had risen up to us. Even my nurse sighed a little as she sat rocking the baby in the cradle, and her mouth twitched at the corners as it did when she was grieved.

They came in together, side by side, William and Thérèse, and even I was struck by the contrast they presented, the girl's beauty seeming more delicate and lovely than ever compared with the man's strong, square sturdiness, her petulancy painfully in dissonance with his great gentleness. I remember his wanting to relieve her of some trifle, and the sharp way in which she declined his help, as clearly as if it happened yesterday.

Thérèse was in a dozen different moods as usual, and it was impossible to say which mood was the dominant one. She had been crying, for her trim bodice still rose and fell convulsively, yet she was laughing, too, as merrily as if grief were the best joke in the world. She had just spoken so sharply to William that the tears had sprung into my nurse's eyes, and now she

looked up into his face and touched his arm in a manner which made the simple action like a passionate caress.

"I am come to say my adieux," she said, in her rich, soft, full contralto voice. "Monsieur talks like a man, but madame has gained the victory as ever. Madame will have to paint herself for the future, or get an Englishwoman to do it. *Bon Dieu, une Anglaise!*"

How she managed it Heaven knows, but for a second she stood there transformed before us; her round shoulders squared, her bright eyes half-veiled in ostentatious mock-modesty, her mobile French mouth drawn down at the corners, her smoothly fitting dress creased and angular. Nay, even her hair seemed to participate in the change, and to fall around her graceful head in stiffer curls than usual. In the twinkling of an eye she had become an Englishwoman—the typical Englishwoman of the Parisian stage.

"How funny you look!" said little Florence.

We all laughed—it was impossible to help it. Even William smiled.

"Ah, you do not like your countrywomen, you prefer Thérèse," said the minx, becoming herself again with a single toss of her saucy head. "But I must go, and all because of the jealousy of a woman. Now, I am not jealous—*moi*, I never was."

"You have no need," said William.

"Who spoke to you, sir?" she returned, flashing round upon him; "who wants to know what *you* think about it? I never forget but you try to make me remember. I am never happy but you try to make me miserable. I never taste a good thing but you snatch it from my lips. Why was I ever born? Why didn't *le bon Dieu* make me old and hateful and ugly?"

She was sobbing now, her face buried in her hands, her body trembling with the violence of her emotion.

"Hush, hush, my dear!" interposed my nurse, gently, rocking the cradle in which slept my youngest sister, little Aileen. "Those are rough words, and cruel too, when offered in exchange for a great gift—a gift worth every other in the world," she added, the tears starting to her eyes.

William's ruddy face was pale as death, and his broad back bent as if there were an unseen load upon it almost insupportable.

"You, you are an angel," sobbed the girl, falling upon her knees and resting her head upon my nurse's lap. "You ought to be in heaven, instead of here where it is hell. When I pray to the blessed mother of God, it is your dear, patient face I seem to see, your faithful breast, pierced as hers was. Bless me, bless me before I go."

"God bless you, my child," said my nurse, "and teach you the difference between gold and dross."

"Amen," said William.

"As for that," cried Thérèse, springing to her feet again, "as for that, there may be two opinions. I've got a ring, old-fashioned and ugly, which is pure gold, and I've got a bracelet—*le voilà!*—only gilded, but I like the bracelet best."

My nurse was silent; William turned away his head to cough.

"*Je préfère bien le bracelet,*" she continued, defiantly, throwing back her loose sleeve and disclosing an arm which entranced even me, and at which William gazed as if spellbound. *Regardez!* it is pretty, is it not? I think it is pretty myself—so firm, so soft, so round, so dimpled." She stroked it and touched it with her lips. "And the bracelet looks well upon it. *Vous trouvez?* It isn't gold, but nobody knows that, and the ring is ugly, and I can't sell it because it was left me by my grandmother for good luck. But I believe in these"—raising her round arms again—"much more than in luck. Therefore I prefer the bracelet. *Je le préfère bien.*"

What a cough William had, to be sure, and how it shook him!

"As for madame," continued Thérèse, pouting, yet dimpling too, "she is as foolish as she is old and ugly. Does she think I would have let that great, fat, ugly husband of hers kiss *me*? Thank heaven, I'm not so hard driven up for kisses as that! I've no need to go begging for them. He wanted a kiss—ha! and got a *soufflet*."

"But you did let him kiss you," I cried, all my anger re-awakened, "you *did*."

She laughed, and made as if she would have kissed me, and laughed louder still when I drew back in a rage.

"I want you all to myself," I said; "I don't want to kiss you if you kiss others too. Go away. No, don't go; you shall not go."

"*Voilà!*" she answered, looking at me with dancing eyes, "the little one is jealous also. He has inherited it."

"Where are you going?" interrupted my nurse, more sternly than I ever heard her speak before.

"Going? Oh, there are a hundred places where I can go. I'm not so homeless as madame thinks. I've got better blood in my veins than she has. And *I* was never sold to pay my father's debts. Oh, the grand name Smythe! the lordly name of Smythe! *Cœur chéri*"—and here she sank upon her knees again—"I know who you are, and I'd rather have a hair of your dear head than all their riches."

"You are a heap, heap better, Mamsell Thérèse," interposed William, "than you'd have us fur to think. Other folk builds 'emself up, but you pulls yourself down perpetual."

"There you go again," she cried, on her feet like a flash of lightning. "Why do you make me bad when I am good? I want to be good sometimes. I am a *méchante fille*, I know it; yet sometimes I want to be good."

She was crying loudly again, and William was coughing, and there was a regular hubbub in the nursery, for the baby had been awakened, and was joining lustily in the chorus. As for me, I naturally made what little noise I could, with my arms round Thérèse's waist, the while I told her, firstly, that she should never go, and then, that I would come after her, and marry her and bring her back in triumph. I don't know what else I might have said but for a piece of toffy, exceedingly sticky, which was suddenly thrust into my mouth, and which completely disabled me. But I ran after them down into the hall, and saw Thérèse spring into the coach, and William get in after her, coughing still.

Then, just when I had abandoned hope, and made sure she wouldn't, Thérèse turned her lovely face and looked at me. All trace of grief had gone out of it, and it was bright and smiling. Nay, I am not quite sure that it was not full of fun at my expense. I heard a silvery laugh as they drove off, and a sweet, fresh voice carolling a French *chanson*. I recognized the air, and even the words, long years afterwards.

"Tra, la, la," sang Thérèse, with one breaking heart beside her, and another breaking heart left behind:

“Tra, la, la, la, la, la, la,
L'Amour vous attend là.”

As if she knew, as if she ever could learn, the cruel enchantress,
what love meant!

CHAPTER III.

A COMMON PERSON BENEATH CRITICISM.

“Es hört doch jeder nur, was er versteht.”

GOETHE (*Sprüche in Prosa*).

ONLY a footman and a lady's-maid! for what was Thérèse after all, in spite of her airs and graces—what was she but a lady's-maid, forced to brush my mother's hair, paint my mother's face, submit to my mother's whims, and take my mother's wages? What difference did it make that she could take a sweet revenge along with these things, by many a side glance over my mother's head into the mirror, smiling a little as if she were triumphantly comparing nature and art?

Only a footman and a lady's-maid! while I was Charles Reginald Smythe (with the Y, remember!), only son to one of the richest men in the City, and, as my father told me a hundred times, getting on tip-toe to say it, for he was but short and the sum vast and majestic, heir to a million—me-illion!

Yet for all the apparent chasm between us, the destinies of these two were irretrievably interwoven with mine. Fate plays us queer tricks; sometimes making of our own most cherished hopes knotted cords wherewith to scourge us; sometimes fashioning a lifeboat of our fears, which may become our only refuge from the shipwreck of our hopes.

I was born in London, and, if I may trust my own memory in regard to that important event, I was born in a row. If you will not trust my memory in this respect, you will allow me to draw conclusions, I suppose, and my conclusions all agree as to the extreme probability of this premise. For why else should rows from my very earliest infancy have come as natural to me as my bottle?

I suppose, too, that neither rows nor bottle agreed with me particularly. I think I ran the gantlet of every disease incidental

to childhood before I was two years old, having a very turbulent special row of my own with Death on each occasion. And I am quite sure that he, like my mother, would inevitably have had the best of it, but for one faithful champion who fought for me, and who would without the least hesitation have supplied a failing bolt to bar him out with her own tender arm, as another did before her.

Need I say that this champion was a woman? For it is the women alone who, doing some of the hardest and least rewarded work of this world, let others have the credit of it.

I was baptized in a row. The dispute as to whether my name should be Charles, after my father, or Reginald, after the hero of the last romance my mother had been reading, was continued even at the font, and only settled by the impatient clergyman, who cut the Gordian knot by christening me with both.

Thus I became duly registered and catalogued among my fellow-creatures, and in the course of time grew into the knowledge that I was I—a little centre around which the universe naturally revolved.

Once—Heaven knows what prompted me to the effort!—I tried to love my mother. I had got into her boudoir somehow, and was sitting on a low footstool near the couch on which she was reclining, watching her hand whereon diamonds glittered, as it lazily turned the pages of a novel she was reading. Her eyebrows were very black, and her cheeks very pink, and her lips even redder than those of Thérèse.

I sat there watching her, my heart growing fuller every moment, my lip beginning to tremble, as I thought of the Bible stories my nurse had told me—of Hagar and Ishmael, of Rebecca and Jacob, of Hannah and Samuel. Surely those veiling lids must cover eyes able to look at me differently than with the cold look to which I was accustomed; surely the warm color on the cheeks must be the reflex of something warmer underneath!

The next moment I was clinging to her, crying passionately, my wet lips on hers, the hot drops from my eyes washing away the rosy flush I had thought so beautiful, and revealing nothing underneath it but a cold and sickly pallor.

I never tried to love my mother again. She murdered even the wish as she threw me off and sat up upon the couch, her face ghastly pale except for patches of red upon her lips, and streaks of the same color, fringed with yellow, on her cheeks.

I was not crying as I scrambled to my feet again, though I had knocked my head against the footstool and bruised my arm. My white frock was crushed and stained, my curls were hopelessly out of order, and my cheek was burning, but I was not crying.

For a moment I stood and she sat, both of us looking at each other. Then I cried out to go back to my nurse, and she cried out to her maid to take me there. That night I woke up from sleep, trembling. Again I saw as in a vision the semblance of a woman's face crowned with a mountain of hair. Its color was a sickly yellow stained with red; its eyes were wide open and dilated—full of dread as if they were looking upon death. So they were—upon the corpse of filial love.

But that another supplied the places of both father and mother, I should, in spite of my heirship, have been a wretched little pauper indeed.

She was nothing particular to look at, that dear nurse of ours. A little woman, neat and unpretending as a Quakeress, with the patient peace in her face which you may oftenest see in the face of such an one—peace which was not the result of want of trial, but the result of having come out of it. “These are they which came out of great tribulation.” Such are the Bible words which recur to my memory when I think of her.

For she *had* come out of it. The deep lines in her face had been graven there by sorrow, yet the peace spread over all made them so beautiful that you would not willingly have missed one. Her eyes were blue and gentle, the smile in them softened by the shadows of many shed tears; her mouth still retained a nervous twitch which it had acquired during some supreme trial; her hands were the large, strong hands of a worker; her hair of a pale yellow, soft as silk. This hair, I fancy, was something like a thorn in the flesh to her, it being in a constant state of rebellion against the severe discipline to which it was subjected. However determinately combed back in the morning under the high mob cap she wore (in which cap, bluebottles used to get and hum, to my intense delight), towards afternoon and evening it would break into ripples, curling back in little rings over her broad, low forehead in a way I used to think lovely. It was obstinate hair, and, like us children, wouldn't always be trained in the way it should go. Once, I remember, the baby pulled off

her cap, and I fancy I see again now the torrent of sunshine which for a moment flooded the sedate shawl she wore crossed over her bosom.

This woman's name was Smith. She told me this once herself in a little burst of emotion, and with an unusual flash in her gentle eye. And she added quickly that my grandfather had borne it with honor and left it unsullied. It had been good enough for him.

I inquired why it was not good enough for my father, being still too much of a child to comprehend the gulf which separates Smith from Smythe.

To which she gave a strange and curious answer, her mouth twitching in the old nervous way and with the same most unusual warmth.

"Let the cruel thing that weaned a brother from a sister answer that," said she.

I pressed for a still further explanation, this being somewhat enigmatical.

Continuing the game of cross questions and crooked answers, she further remarked, sobbing now and strongly agitated, that it was offering up of own relations on the shrine of Mammoth (I think she said Mammoth, though I don't pretend to know what she meant), which somehow or other had resulted in Smythe, and finally she broke into a fit of crying, all the more terrifying because she cried so seldom, until it became quite as much as I could do to kiss her back to smiles again.

I remember that the smiles were very watery, and that the gentle bosom upon which I nestled was long agitated. When she put me to bed an hour afterwards, she herself joined audibly with me in one clause of the Lord's Prayer, repeating it with almost passionate earnestness. "Forgive us our trespasses," we said together, "as we forgive them that trespass against us."

Even after she had said good-night and snugly tucked me up in my cot, she lingered musingly beside me, finally kneeling down again at the bedside to lay her head upon the pillow close to mine; her hair hopelessly in confusion, her sunken cheek brightly flushed, her gentle lips trembling. After a few moments of silence she put her mouth close to my ear, and whispered softly that I must forget what she had said, that it was naughty of her to have said it, and that she was sorry. I nearly had forgotten, in

the interest of a wonderful fairy story she had told me since, probably for that very purpose, but this remark of hers, well meant but injudicious—the dear little woman was not wise in her generation, being one of the children of light—brought it all back again, investing it with new importance. I fell asleep murmuring her own words of an hour before :

“Let the cruel thing that weaned a brother from a sister answer that.”

CHAPTER IV.

BALLYACORA HALL.

“But the child’s sob in the silence curses deeper
Than the strong man in his wrath.”

ELIZABETH B. BROWNING.

I WAS eight years old when we migrated to Ballyacora Hall. Two or three other things of almost equal importance occurred about the same period. Firstly, I was promoted to real trousers—*real* ones, like a man’s. Secondly, my curls were cut off. Thirdly, I became owner of a live pony and a live groom, both of whom could wince if I whipped them. Hip, hip, hip!—

No, I can’t for the life of me! There was a fourthly, which, like Aaron’s rod, swallowed up all the others, remaining afterwards as lean and gaunt as ever.

I had to part with my nurse. All my kickings, and screamings, and threatenings to kill myself lost their potency on this occasion. Why, I learned afterwards.

Ballyacora Hall, County Cork, Ireland, had become my father’s in some mysterious manner connected with a bankrupt lord, with race-courses, and the devil to pay generally. I picked up this information from scraps of talk which fell from the lips of my elders, piecing them together, while preserving every outward sign of complete indifference.

I also found out in the same manner that, though my maternal grandfather had certainly been a baronet, that high-minded aristocrat had not scrupled to allow his daughter to pay his numerous debts in a way which *she* called heroic, but which my father styled something very different. And a very tough rod, fash-

ioned out of this act, was in constant requisition by my parents for the chastisement of each other.

But in whatever way Ballyacora Hall became the property of my father, it certainly possessed eminently suitable qualities for making a gentleman of his heir. It was so redolent of aristocratic perfume from cellar to attic that you couldn't live in it without imbibing its odor. The wine-vaults had formerly been dungeons, wherein kernes had been tortured to death, and there was a recess in the wall still which had once contained, so they said, a human skeleton. Up-stairs was an oaken chest, which smelt like a vault, and which had been the burial-place of a noble lady, nailed in there by an offended lord to die at her leisure. And the banqueting, now the entrance, hall still reeked with the legends of former revellers, when the times were "good old times," and masters were masters, and serfs serfs, and women creatures to be dealt with as men chose. What wonder that, after sucking in such tales like mothers' milk, I went out among *my* dependants to swagger and hector and kick where I could—every evil instinct in me at its strongest, every good one dormant?

Thus I grew up to be fourteen years old, a big, handsome, headstrong boy; my only discipline an occasional thrashing from my father, at times when I deserved it least; my only mentor an occasional twinge from a conscience which had been so tenderly fostered in my early childhood that no neglect would quite silence it now.

It was one of these twinges of conscience which sent me to the top of the house before my departure for Eton to say good-bye to my neglected sisters, who lived, or sickened and died, up there, out of sight and sound and hearing of the denizens below.

"Poor little wretches!" I thought, as I mounted stair after stair, "what a deuce of a way to go up and come down! By the way, do they *ever* come down?"

And my heart swelled a little, half with pity, half with complacency at my own superior position—the boy who could not be ignored—the heir who would be lord of all.

I was directed in my search for the right room by a child's voice and the song of a canary. I opened the door, walked in unannounced, and stood among its inmates.

My abrupt entrance was the signal for a wild retreat on the

part of several long-haired, short-frocked, bare-legged, sticky-mouthed atoms of feminine humanity to the protecting skirts of nurse. Only two remained stationary, the baby in the cradle (even the slatternly nursemaid rocking it started up aghast at my unexpected appearance) and a little girl in a corner, who continued her singular occupation of tearing paper from the wall, with a nonchalance which surprised even me.

"Hullo!" I said, "what's the row?"

(Rows came so natural to me, you know.)

The flock of timid sheep clustered round nurse looked at me with wide blue eyes, but uttered not a word. The little girl in the corner laughed a harsh, disdainful laugh, most unchildlike.

"Oh, 'tis only that they're so naughty and so ill-behaved, sir," said nurse, a gaunt, bony, scraggy-necked individual, with a sharp voice and sharp red nose. "Nobody'd think as I took the pains with 'em I do, or that they was clean this morning. Hold your noise, you brute!" This last to the canary, which broke out into a shrill, sarcastic whistle.

Oh, how knowing that bird looked, to be sure! How artfully he cocked one bright eye, first at me and then at nurse! How cunningly he turned a pirouette on his perch, coming up wrong side foremost and seeming to be pantomimically saying with his quivering tail: "Gammon, sir, gammon, all gammon!"

"That is a lie, Atkinson," said the little girl in the corner, quietly endorsing the canary, the while she continued her occupation of stripping the wall of its covering. "You stayed in bed this morning to breakfast and told Sally to dress us, and Sally read her book and told us to dress ourselves. That's the reason we are so dirty, except Florry. Florry would be clean in a pigstye."

I don't think any one in the room drew breath for a few seconds after this speech, except perhaps the baby. I'm sure the canary didn't, for he stood motionless on his perch, his head drawn into his body and every feather in him standing out as straight as an arrow. I'm sure *I* didn't either, for the look nurse directed towards the back of the daring little speaker was almost murderous.

"Is it me or Miss Mabel that's telling a lie?" she gasped, turning to another of the children, whom, if I hadn't known it before, I should still have recognized as Florence from her sister's last

words. Her pinafore was the only unsoiled one in the room, her trousers were the only ones frilled. Her snowy neck and shoulders, soft, dimpled hands, and rose-tinted cheeks seemed unsoilable. I noticed too that her long, rich brown curls were carefully brushed and tied back with a ribbon. It was evident that whether anybody else took care of her or not, Florence would take care of herself. She stood among the others, unstained and soiless, like a delicate hothouse flower among weeds.

"Is it me or is it Miss Mabel?" repeated the nurse.

I watched Florry's blue-veined lids fall over her bluer eyes, and saw the rose-tint on her cheek deepen a little.

"Florry will say what you wish," broke in again that fearless voice from the corner; "she is afraid of being beaten else, or having her ribbon taken away, and Florry loves her own comfort and fine clothes better than the truth. I used to be afraid of you too, but I'm not now. I've made you afraid of me."

"Come out of that corner this minute," said nurse, now too furious to conceal her wrath any longer. "Of all spiteful, impish—"

"Go on," said the voice; "let Charley hear you, and the nice words you teach us. I'll come out of the corner when I choose; you put me here for your pleasure, and I shall stay for mine."

It was time to put an end to the scene, for nurse's wrath was changing from hot to cold, and a strangled sob made me think with terror of my mother's hysterics. I put out my hand and drew one of the weeds towards me—a pretty weed with innocent eyes, a rosebud of a mouth, extremely dirty, and a quantity of rough, unkempt yellow hair hanging behind it. This weed, which had a chubby thumb in its mouth, was my favorite among them—little Irish Aileen.

"Come," I said, coaxingly, "you'll talk to me, won't you? I'm going away to school, and I sha'n't see you again for ever so long. What's the matter? You know who I am, don't you?"

If Aileen's thumb had been soluble, it must have disappeared before my eyes, she sucked it so vigorously.

"Miss Aileen, you naughty girl, take your thumb out of your mouth and answer your brother," said nurse, glad to find a less dangerous victim, "or—"

The "or" was sufficient. The thumb came out with a sound

like a cork from a bottle, and Aileen's cherub lips opened to a lisping "Yeth."

"Who am I, then? Don't be frightened," I said encouragingly.

"Renewed hesitation, renewed impetus, and the answer came forth again with a burst:

"Master Charles."

"What a silly little girl you are! Say 'Charles.'"

"Nurse talls you Master Charles, and says she would like to have the trimming of you."

"Nurse is only a servant—only a common servant," I replied indignantly, "but you will be a lady. She calls you *Miss* Aileen too, doesn't she?"

"Thometimes—" this with a pressure of the baby lips, which shows me that, though Aileen can be awed by nursery discipline, she is still capable of revolt against it—"and thometimes hussy, and chit, and 'ittle yetch."

Aileen is not such a heroine as that other weed in the corner. Her courage is of a true feminine order; capable of audacious daring, but rapidly sinking afterwards into profound dismay at its own act. She drew nearer to me as she spoke, and put her little hand upon my shoulder.

"Never mind," I said, breaking the succeeding silence by an embarrassed laugh. "Tell me what I shall bring you when I come home for the holidays. What would *you* like, Florence? Speak. You are the eldest."

Florence's blue eyes brightened, her breath came a trifle quicker, the lovely color on her cheek deepened again.

"Well?"

"A pink frock, trimmed with lace," she said, eagerly.

"Our last kitten was black, and not all the soap in the world could wash it white," broke in that uncanny voice from the corner.

"But we never tried," said innocent Aileen; "bethides, it would have hurt it."

"And what would you like, Mabel?" I asked, and I waited with curiosity for the answer.

For the first time since I entered the room Mabel turned so that we could see her face. I had often seen it before, of course, but I saw it now with opened eyes and awakened understanding.

There was no beauty in it. The forehead was too broad and pronounced for a girl, the temples too bare and prominent. Even the keen, sarcastic gray eye looked more dangerous than attractive; there was a sparkle in it, sharp as the edge of a knife. Her scanty brown hair was close-cropped like a boy's, her long nose slightly crooked; round her thin, straight mouth were lines that would have looked premature in a woman of thirty. Her mouth was expanded and her forehead contracted, yet she was neither smiling nor frowning as she answered me.

"What is it to be, Mabel?"

"A rod for a fool's back," said the strange girl.

I don't know why I colored, nor why I fancied that these words were aimed with special intention, and that their aim was myself. As if the child knew what she was talking about! Then I turned to Aileen.

"Now, my pet, what is your choice?"

"Can I have what I want most?"

"Yes, what you want most."

There was a curious agitation in Aileen's little throat, and her blue eyes were filled with tears, and her round mouth was quivering.

"Don't cry. You ain't going to cry, are you? Tell me what you want most."

If there had been a recording angel present, he would have had a heavy reckoning to set against my mother's name that moment. The look on the child's face was full of infinite pathos and infinite reproach.

She put her arms around my neck and her wet cheek close to mine, and whispered, so low that no one else could hear:

"Bring me back a new mamma."

If there had been a recording angel present, no tear, no ocean of tears, could have blotted out *that* indictment. I had a boy's heart, tough and unimpressible, but the words fell heavy upon it; they left an indelible wound there, which is angry and throbs still.

I went away soon after that, after having distributed my sweets and kissed each dirty little mouth, save one. I could not kiss Florence; she had advanced towards me with so much graceful dignity that I made her as awkward a bow as I should have done to a grown lady.

Nurse accompanied me to the door, once more as sweet and slimy as butter-scotch, as mellow as toffy. "How Miss Mabel do put me out, to be sure!" she said; "but there, I never bear malice. My bark's worse than my bite any day."

I made no response. When she shut the door I remained a moment on the landing, but there was no sound inside, save the creaking of the cradle and the song of the canary. Yet there was an oppressive feel in the silence quite the reverse of reassuring.

I had ascended the stairs with a vague expectation of finding three or four feminine creatures there, looking a little different outwardly, but as like as peas within. I had imagined sweets and dolls in the present, dresses and lovers in the future, to be the summit of their ambition. Yet even in that neglected garden each plant was growing according to its nature. Culture might make an apple of the crab, a plum of the sloe, a garden of the hedge-side rose, but it was powerless to induce the bramble-bush to put forth figs, or the fig-tree brambles. The characters of those three sisters of mine were as different as if they had not sprung from the same root and been cultivated in the same soil—nay, as different as if they had been masculine instead of feminine. My thoughts were crude enough, but I pondered over these things.

I had found one sister capable of vanity, one capable of sarcasm, one capable of love.

"A rod for a fool's back." Who was rod, and who was fool? Nonsense, pure folly!

Yet the words haunted me, recurring again and again like a prophecy.

CHAPTER V.

LIFE AND ITS ATTRACTIONS.

"Only deeds give life its strength, and only moderation its charm."—JEAN PAUL.

THE next day I left home for Eton, went through the usual courses of fagging and flogging there, picked up some scraps of knowledge, the most important of which was perhaps that I was

by no means universally acknowledged as the centre of the universe, and finally, after being, as I congratulate myself, rather brilliantly plucked at Oxford after a few years' residence there, came home to celebrate my majority.

That over, and the discovery made that my sisters were growing into remarkably fine girls; that there was no other fine girl circulating round, not a sister, available for a preliminary flirtation; that my father was balder, grayer, and more plebeian-looking than ever; and that my mother was having the worst of it in her daily contest with age, I came to the definite conclusion that Ballyacora was the dullest place in creation, and life there insupportable.

This result I communicated in the best of good faith to my father, almost as soon as it was arrived at.

We were alone together in his *sanctum sanctorum*, euphemistically called "the study," though the only subject studied there was £ s. d.—debit and credit. I was lounging in his easy-chair, the while he stood before me, my sensitive university nose wrinkling in undisguised disgust at the tradesman-like atmosphere of the place, my sensitive hands thrust deep down into my trousers pockets for fear of contamination.

"I can't stand this humdrum place any longer," I said. "I want to see life and to enjoy it."

"And so you shall, Charley," said my father, "so you shall."

There was something in the tone of his voice as he spoke which startled me and made me look up; something as if two voices belonging to two people had melted into one. And yet, though melted, they were separate still, and discordant, and not in unison.

There was also a double expression in his face as I looked at it. The one half, the usual and dominant expression—the other, a latent and concealed one, long kept in the background, but now breaking irresistibly forth in futile yet hot rebellion.

And for a moment I recognized the old English oak cracking the varnish which would fain have concealed its existence—the true among the false, his heirloom and mine, inherited from a long line of noble ancestors.

"So you shall," he said, "on one condition."

"What is that?"

"You are my only son," he continued, wiping his face with a

red-and-yellow silk handkerchief, as if conscious that it was eloquent on its own account and had better be silenced, "and are heir to a million—a me-illion."

I had heard this so often that it seemed as natural and as immutable a law of the universe as that my hair was blond and curly, that my mother read novels perpetually, that the girls were of no importance as compared to me, and that the earth revolved round the sun.

"A me-illion," he continued, one hand on the bulging pocket of his coat, the other jingling loose coin in his breeches pockets, "wasn't earned in a day, no, nor in a month either, nor without sleepless nights and anxious days, and tears of blood, and indignities without number, and insults to be stored up and paid back with usury."

As he withdrew his hand from the bulging pocket to draw forth the red-and-yellow pocket handkerchief again, I almost heard the varnish creak, it split so furiously; as he wiped away some moisture which had gathered in his eyes, I think that if my moral nature had not been so warped and poisoned, and he the poisoner, I should almost have respected him. As it was, the emotion which for a moment contracted my throat was gone as he revarnished himself and revarnished me.

"What is the condition?" I asked carelessly.

But though I asked, I knew well enough what he meant. It had been talked about a hundred times. Even the babies in the nursery must have known that I was destined to marriage with a duke's daughter; to scale the summit of the aristocratic ladder which my father had striven so unsuccessfully to mount himself.

And I was satisfied, on the whole, with this condition. I would do what he wished. Only not now, not now! I must have my fling first.

"I've sweated and toiled all for you, my boy," he went on. "To make a gentleman of you has been the aim of my life. I was not always Smythe of Ballyacora. And if the place is dull to you, don't you think it's dull to me? don't you think I want a bit of change sometimes? But I'm willing to give up everything else for the sake of the one thing I've set my heart upon. Look at you there, young, rich, handsome, clever—a match for any one!"

He was looking at me with pride and affection, and yet his look did not soften, it only hardened me. For my thoughts had sprung back with a sudden rebound to long-forgotten memories. I saw another face, something like his and yet so different, and heard a voice saying, "Let the cruel thing that weaned a brother from a sister answer that."

"You *shall* see life," he said, "see it at your leisure and with full pockets. I can wait another year or two. And then, my boy, you will come back to fulfil my life's desire, and take my place in Ballyacora Hall.

"I have always done my duty by you," he concluded, pompously, "and I shall expect you then to do your duty by me."

If occasionally licking me, not for my benefit, but his own relief, if pampering every bad thing within me, if stifling my conscience and pauperizing my heart, had been doing that duty, so he had—so he had. As for mine to him, had he never read those divine words, "What a man soweth, that shall he also reap"?

So we separated. I went up-stairs to make preparation for my speedy departure from Ballyacora, aided or hindered therein by Aileen, who persisted in wasting oceans of love upon me in spite of my meagre acknowledgment of the same, while he remained behind, either engrossed in the absorbing study of £ s. d. or brooding over his parental programme and its approaching consummation.

But, lack-a-day! Fate sometimes plays the dickens with parental programmes.

I had written to some Oxford friends of mine—friends after my father's own heart, for they were both noble, I mean *titled*—and informed them that I was coming up to London to see life in their company. After which I dutifully went again to my father's study to receive from him certain pieces of paper and his blessing; thrashed Patsey, my groom, to make him remember, and handsomely tipped him to make him forget; ran up to my mother's boudoir to kiss her, stage-fashion, both of us simultaneously saluting the air; rubbed my sprouting mustache against Aileen's wet little face; and departed in high feather, leaving the dullest place in creation and my own destiny behind me for an indefinite period. To youth to-day is

everything; to-morrow, something so far removed as hardly to be worth taking into consideration.

Well, I saw life in the company of these noble friends, both of whom sought to find some new bloom upon it from the freshness of their companion; saw it at first with eager curiosity, quaffing cup after cup of its pleasures with all the insatiability of immaturity; then, suddenly, I came to the dregs, and the swallowing of them sickened me.

There was nothing worth living for in England; that was as clearly evident to me as that Ballyacora was the dullest place in creation. Again I tried to turn my back upon myself, forgetting that whithersoever I went I must carry it with me.

"It's *une grande passion* you need," said the nobler of my two noble friends, Lord George Graceless, who was himself *tout épris*, as he called it, with one of the ladies of the ballet. (My other noble friend, Sir Harry Goitt, was already gone—to the dogs.)

"I'll go abroad," I said, "and try life there."

"If it wasn't for Celestine I'd go with you," sighed his lordship. "They understand how to live better than we do over there in France."

So I went to France, carrying my malady with me, for I could not leave myself behind.

And I went to Austria and Spain, and finally to Italy, seeking what I could not find—an illusive something which ever danced before me, and the futile search for which led me deeper and deeper into the marshes.

At last, weary and hopeless, I crossed the mountain barrier and descended into Switzerland.

I would spend a few days here, I thought, to try and believe in nature, if I could, after having lost all faith in man. I wandered on among defiles and over mountains, looking up to the snowy summits all turned towards God, hoping that up there, at least, was purity, long since vanished, alas! from every spot nearer earth.

It was an evening early in September, and the sun was setting, when I reached Lucerne. The promenade beside the lake was thronged with admiring spectators, among whom I wandered listlessly and hopelessly. There were people of all nations among the crowd. Ever and anon I caught scraps of English, French, German, and Italian.

The setting sun, dying in a lake of blood behind Mount Pilate, bathed the world in a crimson flood, and heated red-hot with its fiery breath the top of every mountain. Mount Pilate itself, clothed sumptuously in purple and fine linen, was beginning to reflect the light of a gentler monarch, now that the more ardent one was departing. Already the moon's young crescent, pale with envy, sent a silvery messenger over the snow to herald her coming; already the deep blush on the mountains was paling, and the gold on the rippling water at my feet changing into silver.

I was listlessly wondering which was the more beautiful, the passion of the moment before or the purity of the present. I was leaning on the parapet and looking down into the dazzling water, when a lady's dress swept lightly over my foot, the lace on a lady's mantle tickled my hand, and a lady's soft, warm breath mingled itself with the breath of Nature upon my cheek.

I had been crowded, hustled, run against, pushed aside a hundred times this evening already, and why these gentle touches should have affected me so powerfully I cannot tell. I only know that they ran through me like a succession of electric shocks, and that every nerve in my body throbbed a response to them. I looked round.

Close beside me stood a lady, and beyond her a gentleman. Both were leaning, as I was, upon the parapet which protects the promenade towards the lake. Both were apparently occupied, as I was, in contemplating the wondrous landscape before us, which Nature had just been freshly coloring into a glory unspeakable.

CHAPTER VI.

PRINCE AND DAME DE COMPAGNIE.

"Who hath not found himself surprised into revenge, or action, or passion for good or evil, whereof the seeds lay within him, latent and unsuspected, until the occasion called them forth."—THACKERAY (*Esmond*).

BUT appearances may be deceitful. The pair beside me, both wonderfully handsome, both evidently struggling with a supreme emotion, were as indifferent to the beauty of the scene before

them as if they had been blind. They were gazing, not at it, but intently at each other.

Yet that she was looking at him could only be guessed at by the expression in his face, turned towards me. It was lit up by the last sun ray, and was all aflame with passion and anger and love and entreaty and fury at the opposition which he seemed to read in hers, and fierce intention to overcome it.

How can I describe him—the man who, I instinctively felt, was destined to become my arch-enemy—the man whom I was fated to hunt down unto his death?

At the very moment when I had finally discovered that life was not worth the living, Fate lit up two fires in my heart, which for a long time burned with almost equal intensity—fires fundamentally opposed, and yet continually fed the one by the other—love and hate.

That he would be no despicable enemy was apparent at the first glance. His rank was evidently far beyond my own. His beauty was so extraordinary that, as I gazed, I saw others gaze, too, in open-eyed admiration.

“What a magnificent man!” whispered an English lady passing us.

“*Mon Dieu ! quelle beauté superbe !*” murmured a Frenchman.

“*Donnerwetter ! welch ein Paar !*” cried an enthusiastic German.

Whether these remarks were heard or not by the object of them, I cannot say. His deep, dark, heavily-fringed blue eyes remained fixed upon the lady’s face ; his beautifully cut, transparent nostrils still quivered ; between his full, red, haughtily curled lips his white teeth gleamed, like those of some magnificent, ferocious wild animal ; and through the rich brown of his complexion you might still see the hot Southern blood palpitate. When at last he spoke I drew my breath to listen, bending my head low over the water, as if that were the sole object of my thoughts.

His voice corresponded to his appearance perfectly. It was soft, musical, seductive, passionate, and commanding, all in one. Through every word he uttered ran a threat which seemed to say : “Yield, or I will compel thee. Resist, and I will oppose the strength of my manhood to the weakness of thy womanhood, and kill if I cannot conquer thee.”

I saw the woman shudder as he broke the spell which had

bound her, and saw, too, the look with which he stilled and silenced her, awing even the fibres of her body into submission.

"Käthe," he said (I understood enough German to be able to follow him), "*Mädchen, entschliesse dich doch. Glaubst du etwa dass meine Geduld ewig dauern wird?*" (Make up your mind. Do you think my patience will last forever?)

She made no answer, except by a quick motion of her hand, meant to indicate, I believe, that there was some one near who might hear and heed him. It is a singular characteristic of women that they never, even at the most critical moment, lose their innate fear of exposure, although men under the same circumstances forget it utterly.

Her companion turned his wonderful eyes, with their attractive yet steely glitter, full on me for a moment, then lowered them contemptuously.

"Bah!" he muttered, "*ein verrückter Engländer*" (a crazy Englishman). "He'll understand no other language than his own accursed one."

I felt flattered, of course, so flattered that I ground my teeth, cursing him through them, and laid my hand involuntarily upon the hilt of a short Italian dagger I kept in my pocket. But I listened on, restraining myself for the present, my tell-tale eyes upon the water.

"Käthe," he said again, and through the music of his voice ran the same chord of threatening, "speak, speak quickly, and say: 'Eberhard, my Eberhard, I will yield, I will do what thou wishest,' or, *bei Gott!* I shall kill thee or kill myself. I cannot endure this uncertainty any longer, *denn ich habe dich lieb. Gerechter Himmel!* until now I scorned the passion, lighting up its flame in the hearts of others, and laughing as it consumed them!"

The fierceness of his manner as he spoke, the brutality of the passion which flashed out of his eyes, his profane use of the tender German words, *Ich habe dich lieb*—words almost more sweetly simple than our English "I love you"—maddened me into a fury as uncontrollable as it was unreasonable. As crazy for the moment as he had insultingly called me, I turned fiercely towards him, my hand again upon the hilt of my dagger, at the sharp point of which my hatred seemed to concentrate itself, and to become deadly, and to lust for blood.

"*Der gnädige Herr verzeihen*," I said, ironically using the most deferential form of words I could find, "but I am neither so crazy nor so ignorant as you seem to imagine. I perfectly understand what you have been saying, and—and—"

The passion which was consuming me consumed my voice too, and prevented my finishing what I had to say. His haughty eyes met mine once more, this time a faint shadow of surprise modifying their brilliancy.

"Very well, sir," he answered, speaking slowly, but in very excellent and refined English, "and what then? You have a right to understand, of course, but gentlemen do not listen."

The hot blood which instantly dyed my face scarlet pleaded guilty to the charge he implied, and maddened me still further. He smiled sarcastically as he turned from me to his companion again. She had slightly moved, and I could see the lovely contour of her face and the slow tears which were falling, one by one, into the water.

"Come, Käthe," he said, "let us go."

"Not yet, sir," I cried, casting prudence, forethought, everything but wild passion, to the wind. "You have twice deliberately insulted me. I call you to account for it. I demand satisfaction."

The contemptuous look with which he now regarded me from head to foot was worse than a blow—worse than a blow in the eyes of all the populace. Then he stooped to the lady, uttering a few rapidly spoken words in a language quite new to me. She rose instantly from her leaning position on the parapet, still keeping her face averted, and they moved slowly away together; his spurred heels (he was attired in the closely fitting, rich uniform of a foreign cavalry officer) seeming to spurn the ground they touched; his long sword clattering noisily after him upon the pavement.

"Sir," I said, quickly following and trying to speak with dignity and calmness, "here is my card. You will give me yours in return if you please, and we can settle this matter at a more convenient season."

He took my card, glanced at the name upon it with that curling back of his full red lips which made him look so like a magnificent wild animal, and said, in a sharp, clear voice, and in words of which every one struck and hurt me:

"I am staying at the Hotel l'Impératrice d'Autriche. If you will call there to-morrow morning I will give orders that my courier and *maître d'affaires*, Monsieur de Laffolie, shall give you audience. He will be quite ready to show you what weapon we use in my country for chastising the impertinences of boys. Not the sword, *Herr je!* but the horsewhip, my young sir, or the cane."

As he uttered these insulting words he tore my card in two, flung it over the parapet into the water, and strode forward again, leaving me with the boiling passion in my heart stilled into that intense quiet which is the beginning of murder.

What I should have done next I know not—I had already drawn my dagger from its sheath—when the lady turned and looked at me, her lovely eyes first full of terrified caution, rapidly changing into profound surprise and eager curiosity.

Oh, those eyes and that face! and, above all, that incomprehensible expression! Had she seen me before or I her, or had we both known and loved one another in a dream?

I do not know when I became aware that I was the centre of attraction for many curious eyes. I remember hearing again the words which had formed an excuse for my first outbreak of fury. "*Ach, ein verrückter Engländer!*" the people cried, forming a dense crowd around the place where I stood. "*Ein verrückter Engländer!*" the burly gendarme echoed, as he forced his way through the gaping multitude and bore down heavily upon me.

CHAPTER VII.

UN GRAND PETIT HOMME.

"For we are all so heavily weighted by the laws and conditions of the present ordered time, that no one, be he never so free, can long remain upright without the support of a business or the excitement of a love affair."

IMMERMANN (*Münchhausen*).

IN another moment I became aware that I was not only a laughing-stock for the public, but also in a confounded pickle. The gendarme's heavy hand was on my shoulder, his red face and flaming mustache in threatening proximity to mine, and his

husky voice of authority in my ears, bidding me hand over the dagger I still brandished and follow him. I knew that opposition would be worse than useless, and might be punished by long months of arrest.

But before I had time to consider what I should do, the hand of the incorruptible officer of the law loosened its grasp of my shoulder to grasp something else; his ferocious mustache suddenly grew quite amicable; his left hand, palm outward, deferentially touched the side of his official hat; and leaving me, the offender, unmolested, he began soundly to rate the unoffending bystanders for blocking up the way.

While I gazed and wondered, half believing myself deluded by some vision, the dagger I still held was drawn gently from my clenched fist and replaced in its sheath.

Looking round amazed, I met a caustic, curious ray darting out from the deep-set eyes of a little, wiry Frenchman.

"Pardon, monsieur," he said, with the national shrug of the shoulders, the national politeness, and the national grimace, "I have fear that I have permitted myself to take too great a liberty, *mais*—ah, monsieur, you have much of—vat you call it?—plock, plock *Anglais*, but it values better to have a little of discretion, a little of patience, with the aristocrats."

His voice began softly, rising at the end of each clause into the sing-song emphasis of "the world's city." His shabby clothes, too, had been made in Paris, and, though rubbed and worn at the seams, had a Parisian jauntiness about them still. His umbrella, a cheap one of cotton, was rolled into the smallest compass possible, and the toes of his shining boots reflected the crescent moon as if they had been mirrors.

"Was it you who sent away the gendarme? Did you hear what that—that devil said to me?" I gasped. "Do you know him?"

"The gendarme?—*mais oui, monsieur*; a very worthy citizen of Lucerne."

"With a weakness for *les pourboires*."

"You have said it, monsieur. But who has not his little weaknesses? Behold mine," showing his shining boots.

"I did not mean him, though."

"I have divined that also. You will say the other."

"I mean the other."

"And you called him *de dayvil*. You have well said, monsieur; it is the truth."

"Do you know him too?"

"*Oui, monsieur*, I know him. I know him well, and I mean, I, to know him better."

The sparkle was gone from his eye, leaving it dark and menacing; his teeth met and moved slowly over one another like the grinding-stones of a mill; the light on his brightly polished boots changed from white to dull red, and looked like spots of blood.

"Where is he staying?" I asked. "What is his name?"

All the music and the bright crescendo were gone from the Frenchman's voice as he answered me:

"He is staying at the Hotel l'Impératrice d'Autriche, and his name is Monsieur le Prince de Pöbeldowski."

"Is he there alone?"

"He is there with Madame la Princesse and suite."

"You do not mean to say that the lady is—that he is married?" I faltered, something putting an icy hand on my heart and congealing its current.

"The lady with him is only the *dame de compagnie* of Madame la Princesse," answered my companion, eying me keenly, "and is poor and *bourgeoise*, I believe. *N'importe*; she is beautiful as an angel. I am old now, but I have been young too *dans le temps*. *Mon Dieu!* what hair! shining like pure gold. What eyes! no sky of summer was ever half so blue. What *teint!* white and pure as the snow upon the tops of the mountains."

He paused, watching me and the betraying hue upon my face, then went on:

"If I were young, instead of old, I would revenge myself on the aristocrat by entering the lists against him and bearing off the prize he is burning to win for himself. The prize may be honest as well as beautiful—*par ma foi, je le crois!*—may prefer marriage with a *bourgeois* to a liaison with a prince."

I remembered the terror-stricken expression on the lovely face when it was turned towards him; I saw again the eager, curious, interested look upon it when it was turned towards me. And suddenly life assumed a new aspect, became filled to the brim with a new desire, to the realization of which I vowed to devote it.

"*Ecoutez*," said the Frenchman, as we moved away from the crowd, "I am going to help you. *Halte là!* there is no reason for that vehement outburst of gratitude, because I am helping myself first. Only the good God knows for how many, many of days I have searched for an ally in vain. I, I also have a little account to settle with Monsieur le Prince."

"You are a gentleman," I said, eagerly; "be my second in this affair. I will kill him, or, by Jove, he shall kill me!"

"*Tiens! tiens!* Behold your English plock! Nevertheless, it is you who would be killed, monsieur. Though he would not fight with you. A prince will not fight with a commoner."

"By Jupiter Ammon, I'll make him, or show him that I, too, can handle a whip!"

Again the Frenchman's teeth met—this time sharply and savagely. Again his voice had lost its melodious ring when he spoke.

"A whip—*un fouet—bon!* We will not forget that either. It, too, must have its place in our programme. But we have learned—we other Frenchmen—to go softly, to bide our time, to use the subterfuges. *Et le temps, le temps de vengeance viendra!*"

He lifted his dark eyes to the peaceful evening sky wherein the young moon now rode in all her glory, and murmured something which sounded like "Gracieuse." For a few minutes we walked on in silence.

"You will succeed, monsieur," he continued. "Something tells me that you will succeed if you will only let me help you. And it is not only the vengeance that I seek—is it not a good work to rescue the innocent?"

He seemed to find his answer in the stars, towards which he turned his eyes again. He seemed to be satisfied with that answer, too, as he turned them back towards me.

"You have seen, monsieur," he continued, "how her blood rushes back affrighted to her heart when he even looks at her. And I have seen her walk alone beside the lake, looking into it, as if only under its water she knew where to turn for safety."

There was nothing now but compassion in the dark eyes of my companion. I took his hand; I grasped it firmly in my own.

"You shall lead, and I will follow," I said; "you shall be my

captain, and I will be your lieutenant and aide-de-camp. As for the prize when it is won, we will—"

"Divide it?" he inquired, with an expressive French grimace. "In the meantime, leave my hand unmaimed, *mon lieutenant*. Ouf! That was the grip of a lion! Permit me to embrace you, French fashion, in return."

French fashion did not quite accord with my British notions, but I submitted to it nevertheless.

"Behold one fact accomplished," he cried, vivaciously. "This evening Fate is smiling on us both. I—I have found an ally; young, eager, vigorous. And you, *mon ami*, you have found something to do."

Something to do. How did *he* know of the malady which was sapping my life-springs? Yet how different life looked now to what it had done an hour before! The blood ran swiftly, almost joyously, through the veins that had been so stagnant. My heart beat high and vigorously. Over a dark horizon a bright star had arisen.

"We will begin at once," I said.

"We will begin at once, monsieur. But you must first know who I am before enrolling yourself under my banner. Will you see it? I always carry it with me."

He drew a small leather case out of his pocket, opened it, and held it before my astonished eyes. It was a piece of blue ribbon, stained with dull red marks. Upon it were stitched a few snow-white hairs. Underneath was written in red ink the one word: "Gracieuse."

CHAPTER VIII.

GRACIEUSE.

"Qui veut voyager loin ménage sa monture."

RACINE (*Les Plaideurs*).

My curiosity was strongly excited. I urged him to begin.

Let me tell the story again, translated from his own words, every syllable of which seemed graven on my heart as he poured it forth in the silvery moonlight. How strangely it contrasted with the peace of nature! The placid water rippled at our feet,

pale lights twinkled feebly in the city behind us, the young moon hung motionless in a cloudless heaven, the solemn mountains had drawn fog-mantles over their ears and seemed to repose. Everything around appeared silently protesting against our disturbing human element and intrusion of human passion into the stillness of the passionless night.

"I live in Lucerne, monsieur," began the Frenchman. "I have already lived here many years. There are reasons why I cannot return to my beloved France—my poor Napoleon-ridden country—political reasons, monsieur. Do not fear. I am an honest man."

Every line in his face—and there were many—had told me that already.

"It was last autumn, monsieur, when that happened about which I am going to tell you. It is not a great thing—you may think it very insignificant when you have heard it. But *n'importe*, I will tell it you all the same.

"Monsieur de Pöbeldowski was also here, as now, with his mother, Madame la Princesse, and suite, only it was another *dame de compagnie*—not this one. I knew him well by sight. Who, having once seen him, could fail to know him again? I think if the arch-fiend could ascend from his infernal kingdom, clothed in every bit of masculine beauty conceivable, he would look like that man."

I assented. The Frenchman had found a fit comparison.

"I lodge in an humble apartment *au rez-de-chaussée*, monsieur, with a widow who doubtless takes as good care of me as I deserve. For if her attentions are meagre and her reproaches magnificent, who am I that I should complain?

"It was a very hot night in August, now more than a year ago. I had sunk to sleep after much uneasy tossing to and fro, but no sooner had I lost consciousness than I found it again. Something sobbing at my bedside caused me to spring up in a fright.

"I was half awake and half asleep, and I thought it was my little sister, who had died, poor little one, at the fête of the Virgin, which was her own fête too, for we had called her Gracieuse Marie, after the blessed Mother of God. I put out my hand, and laid it on her soft, warm, curly head, and cried: '*Gracieuse, ma petite! sois tranquille; c'est moi.*'

"Then I awoke a little more, and remembered how we had

laid her in her last bed, dressed in the pretty frock she had worn at the fête, white, with blue ribbons, the Virgin's colors, and I sat up all trembling and said, "It is a spirit, and it no doubt betokens my death."

"It would have been quite dark in my room, for the night was sulphurous and heavy, but for the rays of a lamp outside in the street. My window was open—I had forgotten to shut it—and I arose in order to do so, and to see what was beside me, whether spirit or living thing. But I only saw my own white face in a mirror and the trembling of a tassel hanging from my *bonnet de nuit*, and I heard nothing save the beating of my own frightened heart.

"‘Pooh!’ I said, ‘a nightmare!—*rien de plus!*’ I mixed and drank to the dregs a strong glass of *eau sucrée*, readjusted my *bonnet de nuit*, glanced down the deserted street, shut my window, and crept into bed again. ‘There’s a storm brewing over Mount Pilate,’ I muttered; ‘I might have known yester evening he wouldn’t unsheath his sword for nothing. It is well I awoke, or I should have got hot ears in the morning for letting in the rain.’

"In spite of the *eau sucrée*, that strong sedative, monsieur, I tossed and turned, seeking sleep in vain on the right hand and on the left. At last I tried what lying still would do, and with one result, at least. I heard the sobbing again, and now I was wide awake. There *was* some one in the room.

"That wasn't a burglar behind the door, it was only my own coat and pantaloons, and those boots were mine too—nobody else's were ever half so bright. And besides, what had I got for any burglar to steal, except some shabby clothes and this umbrella, and a cup of *tisane* in the cupboard? I broke that cup looking for him there, and came to myself in the dismay of remembering that Madame Papillote (that's my hostess) was taking care of the remnant of my half-yearly pension, and would also take good care to make me liberally pay for the damage.

"Besides—though that was the last thought of all—I remembered that a burglar was hardly likely to begin his work by sobbing."

"So you found nothing?"

"Your question savors of impatience, monsieur; you doubtless think that I am unusually old and garrulous; nevertheless, if I am to tell my tale at all I must tell it in my own way. Yes, I did find something. I heard a movement under the bed, val-

iantly put in my hand, which rested again on something warm and soft and curly, and drew forth—”

He stood still, turning his head to look at me. I stood still too, looking at him

“Ah, monsieur, you were smiling just now at my long-windedness, and I smiled too, yet some smiles are as mirthless as the lightning flash which momentarily lights up a deep well of tears. My heart is full of tears now as it was then, when I remember the poor, suffering creature which whined as I touched it, and pitifully licked my hand and its own bleeding wounds, looking up at me the while with soft, dark, imploring eyes, for all the world like those of my lost Gracieuse.

“Ah, monsieur, it seems to me that those who can bear to hurt the beautiful living things which God gave us will be punished hereafter with the heaviest punishment he has to inflict. I would rather have to answer at the great judgment seat for many a crime which men deem mortal, than for one cruel act to a helpless thing put into my power.”

“It was only a dog, then?” I said, half disappointed, half uneasy.

“Only a dog, monsieur. A little dog whose long, silky hair was as white as the dress in which we buried my Gracieuse. Round its neck was a blue leather collar, upon which was worked in raised gold a princely coronet and the letter P. But now everything was stained with blood—clotted blood, which clung to my hands and to my *robe de chambre*, and seemed to get inside me somehow and cling to my heart.

“Listen, monsieur. I knew the dog belonged to Monsieur de Pöbeldowski, and I knew too—I knew it by instinct—that it was he who had beaten it to death. There were plenty of rumors concerning him floating about Lucerne, and not a few of them had penetrated even to my humble lodging *chez Madame Papillote, rez-de-chaussée*. But rumors are not invariably correct, and therefore we are not bound to believe that mademoiselle, if she falls, will not be the first victim of her sex by many who have perished in swamps, attracted thither by the will-o'-the-wisp of his wonderful beauty; nor that he once caused a disobedient servant to be tortured to death; nor that—but why recall them all? They are doubtless exaggerated, for even in distant Hungary—he is a Hungarian—there must, *même pour les princes*, be something like law.

"Yet there is one crime laid to his charge of so serious a nature that I cannot refrain from mentioning it. He was not always the ruling prince. There was an elder brother whom the people loved, for he was brave and good and gentle, and this brother died—was killed. Let me tell you how.

"One day there was to be a grand boar hunt in the forest, and the princes, both of whom were passionately fond of this diversion, were to take part in it. I heard from a bystander, one of the suite, that it was a splendid sight to see them mounted, a gallant retinue surrounding them, the bugles blowing, the hounds straining at their leashes and panting for the chase. The princess mother—stepmother of the elder, and who hated him—was there to see them depart, and it was remembered long after how the elder prince turned back towards her, his impatient horse rearing high at the sudden check, to say: 'Mother, there is a strange foreboding in my heart; if I have ever sinned against thee, forgive it now, for the sake of this my brother, whom we both love so dearly.'

"The people never forgot how the pale cheek of the princess turned to sickly yellow at these noble words, nor how she shrank from him as if his soft voice had been a blow. They remembered, too, how the younger prince—Prince Eberhard—struck his spurs into the flanks of the fiery animal he rode, so that it started off at a fierce gallop. The whole brilliant cavalcade followed, leaving behind in the courtyard of the palace a silence like the silence of death.

"Never was such a hunt. Every shot told, and the princes and their followers seemed alike insatiable. At last the day began to fade, and they were forced to return to the spot where the horses were waiting.

"As they turned to go, another shot echoed through the darkening wood, followed by a cry of such intense horror that every leaflet in the broad forest, every startled bird in the thickets, every drop of blood in the hearts present seemed to stand still to listen. And then the people knew that the noblest of them all had fallen—that it was the life-blood of their beloved prince which was sickening every blade of grass upon the sward. After this manner your enemy and mine, monsieur, came into the rights of the firstborn.

"Yet the people said it was an accident."

My little friend at this point sank into reflection—reflection which was so deep and profound that he only emerged from it at the gates of Lucerne.

“Behold our destination,” he cried, “and my story is only just begun.”

“Finish,” I said. “Let us turn again; my time is my own.”

“But not mine,” he answered, shrugging his shoulders, and looking up at me with his expressive French grimace. “What a delusion it is of ours, my friend, to think we rule the women, when, nine times out of ten, they so despotically rule us.”

“What has that to do with your story?”

“Only this, that it terminates it for the present. I shall get something warm for supper to-night, and yet go to bed hungry and cold. There’s a riddle for you.”

“Come to my hotel and sup with me.”

“*Merci bien, mon ami*, but I prefer to pay to-day’s debts to-day. *Au revoir.*”

“Come and breakfast with me to-morrow.”

“I will do that gladly, and finish my story, too, if it will not weary you.”

And he was gone, first having saluted military fashion, his open hand against his shabby hat. There was something military in his walk, too, I thought, as I watched him pacing down the street from under the broad *porte-cochère* of my hotel.

Well, Fate had poured a good deal into my empty life this day!

CHAPTER IX.

A CÔTELETTE, A CAT, AND A CAPTAIN.

“L’homme est si grand que sa grandeur paroît même en ce qu’il se connoit misérable. Un arbre ne se connoit pas misérable. Il est vrai que c’est être misérable que de se connoître misérable; mais c’est aussi être grand que de connoître qu’on est misérable. Ainsi toutes ces misères prouvent sa grandeur. Ce sont misères de grand seigneur, misères d’un roi détrôné.”

PASCAL.

I was long in sinking to sleep, and when I awoke it was hardly yet morning. I walked to my window, threw it open, and looked out.

Long rows of lighted windows casting faint reflections on the lake showed me that the ever-active *Kellner* were at their morning work, and Nature outside was astir and busy trimming the mighty lamp which would soon extinguish the others every one. The east was bright in glowing expectation of the returning monarch of day; the usurping moon had fled in alarm; the stars, his courtiers, were wan and pale in the morning sky; the mountains were shaking off the mists in which their heads had been shrouded during the night; the green waters of the lake were rippling a musical welcome to the golden sunbeams; while the snowy top of many a virgin peak was beginning to crimson like the pure cheek of a maiden under the fiery kiss of her lover.

I had been restless during the night, haunted by many strange visions. Little white dogs, clammy with blood, had looked up at me with human eyes, and spoken to me with human voices. Beauteous ladies had called upon me to come to their assistance. Frenchmen had rescued me from poisonous daggers levelled at my heart, and, oddly enough, the instant afterwards challenged me to mortal combat. Gendarmes had dragged me off to prison, to die there at my leisure, like the fair lady of Ballyacora Hall. Madame Papillote had snatched untasted suppers from my famishing lips. Princes had fallen before me like stubble before the wind. And in the midst of all I had felt Aileen's wet cheek against my own, while my father stood up to curse me, only prevented by a woman's resolute hand over his mouth, and a woman's earnest voice saying, "Let the cruel thing that weaned a brother from a sister answer that."

The full day had been succeeded by a fuller night. A thousand interests had sprung up in a life which had been atrophizing for want of one.

My new leader was as punctual as the waiter with our breakfast, and the last stroke of ten found us together in the private room where I had ordered it should be laid. I would not let him talk much until his appetite was appeased, for I had noted the wistful glance he cast upon the viands, and remembered his own sombre prediction of the night before.

So I replenished his plate with every good thing I could find to put upon it, keenly watching him while I ostensibly played with my knife and fork, for I had no appetite, because I believe you may gain much knowledge of a man's character from the

way in which he eats. And, as I watched, my confidence in him was confirmed, and my heart went out to this new acquaintance freely and unreservedly.

For, firstly, he ate like a gentleman; he was undeniably hungry, and the viands were such as to give the spur to appetite, but in the midst of his appreciation and enjoyment he never forgot propriety. Then, again, he ate like a man of sound and unimpaired digestion. Beginning with more substantial dainties, he finished up with a huge slice of sweet cake—which I couldn't have touched—and finally pledged me in a glass of sparkling Veuve Clicquot, his eyes as sparkling as it, like a man who knows the use but not the abuse of the good gifts of God. Your drunkard cannot eat like that, still less the man of vicious life. I was only twenty-two, and he, at least, sixty; but, alas! I couldn't remember the meal which had given me half the innocent pleasure.

"Behold me satisfied at last," he said. "Truly, monsieur, you have entertained me with a *déjeuner* fit for a prince."

"Did you get any supper last night?" I asked, smiling.

"Ah, you may well inquire, judging of my prowess to-day! No, monsieur, but the cat did."

"The cat?"

"Monsieur, she is an animal of great discernment. She acts as my Nemesis."

"Why don't you hang her?"

"Sooth to say, monsieur, such a thought has sometimes come to me, but I have rejected it. Do not we prey upon all animals? Can we blame them if they sometimes prey upon us? Nevertheless, I think that my Nemesis is sometimes hard upon me."

"How?"

"A little punishment is salutary, monsieur, and teaches us humility, but an overdose is a folly as well as a wrong, because it rouses up resistance. Now, I confess to having felt badly treated this morning when my coffee and *petit pain* also were appropriated by that insatiable animal. And I could not quite agree with Madame Papillote, who said that I deserved it."

I laughed. There was something comical in his distress, and in the droll way in which he gave it utterance.

"Ah, monsieur, you laugh, and Madame Papillote scolds, yet for all that I find that my little cross is sometimes hard to bear."

Madame Papillote says she is a mother to me, but, to tell the truth, I feel occasionally that she is more *marâtre* than *mère*. However, we have had enough of myself. Let us consider what to do next. And, firstly, can you still, after a night's rest, consent with all your heart to be my ally?"

"To be your *aide-de-camp*, to follow your banner? Yes, monsieur, with all my heart."

"And you do not even first inquire who I am?"

"No, monsieur. Your face is in the full light of day, and there is no shadow there to shame it. Your eyes meet mine straight and unflinchingly. For the rest, I have heard you talk, and I have seen you eat."

It was his turn to laugh now, and he did laugh heartily. But there was something like a mist before his eyes, and his hand trembled as he put it into his pocket.

"You gave me a grand testimony yesterday, *mon ami*, and you gave it me unsolicited and with frank confidence. You said I was a gentleman, and you did not mean that I was an aristocrat, did you?"

I checked the smile which began to curl my lips as my eye rested involuntarily on his well-brushed pantaloons, his frayed linen collar and shiny surtout, and I answered boldly, "I did not."

"*Merci bien, monsieur*. Thank you heartily for that as well as for the other. I have a little word to say to you about the aristocrats before we commence our work. *Un tout petit mot, monsieur*; do not have fear. In the meantime, *regardez*."

He had drawn a card from his pocket, carefully wrapped in a scrap of newspaper. I opened it and read:

LOUIS-ADOLPHE MOPPERT,

Capitaine au 67^{me} Régiment de Ligne.

"Ha, a soldier! A real captain to fight under!"

"I *was* a soldier, monsieur. I helped, side by side with many a brave comrade, to fight a grand battle for France. But we did not risk our lives and the lives of those dear to us—we other Frenchmen—to grovel at the feet of an emperor. We did not drive out kings and their sycophants to worship a golden calf in the shape of a Napoleon. Bear witness, all ye other nations of the earth, we were not fools enough for that!"

He had sprung to his feet, his fist clenched, his mild, sometimes sarcastic, eye irate and fiery.

"Pardon, monsieur," he added, more quietly, as he reseated himself, "it is a subject which puts every drop of my old blood into motion, and makes me twenty-six again instead of sixty. For they offered me—*me*, monsieur—a *de* before my honest name—they would have made of me—of Moppert, monsieur—a hatching duke!"

"And you would rather be yourself?"

"In my humble lodging, *rez-de-chaussée*, chez *Madame Papilote*—a cat the arbiter of my destiny. *Mais oui*, monsieur, you have said it."

I was silent and sat watching him, my head upon my hand.

"My face is in the full light, as you have already remarked, monsieur, and yours, facing it, is therefore in shadow, and still further shrouded by your hand. I feel the expression you partially hide rather than see it, and I feel it in my inmost soul."

"What expression, monsieur?"

"Listen, *mon ami*; speak truth to Moppert, even if that truth must murder remorselessly a new-born hope. Let it perish rather than be reared upon a lie."

"What is it you want to know, monsieur? Ask, and I will answer like—like an honest man."

"*Bon!* that is better even than gentleman. Tell me then, would you have consented more willingly to work with me if I had been a duke, or even Monsieur *de* Moppert?"

"Not one iota."

"*Bon* again! My soul begins to expand. I shake off one fear which was heavy upon it."

"Yet another remains?"

"Truly, monsieur, I will be as honest as you and frankly avow it. There is another. It has shrunk to half its size, but is not dead. It breathes, it moves, it is capable of growth still."

"Tell it me."

"I will go back a little way and tell you how it was begotten. It had no existence yesterday. And first I will tell you how it was that I ventured to speak to you yesterday, and even to act for you, the stranger. I was on my quest, as usual. I was looking for an ally. You are not the first whom Monsieur de

Pöbeldowski has wantonly insulted. He takes deliberate pleasure in forcing every one with whom he comes in contact to lick the dust. And there are many, monsieur, who feel it an honor to lick dust at the feet of a prince.

"But even before that thunderous encounter, when for the first time he met with furious opposition, I had been watching you with interest. You are young, handsome, evidently rich. Why should *you* have stood among the gay crowd like an image of despair?—no, not of despair, you had left that behind, and there was nothing beyond you but death."

I started. By what magical power had the little man been enabled to look into my heart?

"Yet, at the very moment when you thought you had outlived love, love was close beside you, waiting to lay a thrilling touch upon your heart. The very power to hate had perished within you, you fancied, when all the time hate was sharpening a dagger to put into your hand. You deemed that you had done with life, when life roughly came to shake you out of your lethargy, saying: 'It is work, not pleasure, which is my aim and end. I have work for thee to do; come and do it!'"

It was true. I had learned to live anew since yesterday.

"A few minutes later, monsieur, I knew that I had found an ally, and that the ally was one after my own heart. For it is when the passions are all ablaze that we see the man as he is. There is no concealing crust of conventionality over him then. Yesterday I thought you were *bourgeois* like myself."

"And to-day, monsieur?"

"To-day I am puzzled, anxious, and uneasy. You have very much the air of a *grand seigneur* as you sit there before me, and a *grand seigneur* is to me what a cat is to a dog. Nature makes me want to worry him. I do not like that curl on your lip, nor those beringed hands, nor that *insouciant* smile, which seems as natural to you as the *fauteuil* on which you are lounging. Look at *my* hands; and as for *fauteuils*, monsieur, a wooden stool is the seat for which *I* was born!"

"Well, suppose I am an aristocrat?"

"*Je m'en doute, monsieur.* You are either one, or have lived so much among them that you have imbibed a good deal of—let us say their odor. Well, I accept the inevitable. I will not let my dislike for a class lead me into injustice against an individual.

Give me the hand, monsieur. We will be allies and—and friends all the same.”

“Or suppose I am not?”

“Ah, monsieur, you must not mock yourself of Moppert. I—I accept the inevitable, but I cannot joke about it. I have suffered too much, I and France, to bear even a light finger on that wound. I am a republican to the nails on my fingers and toes, monsieur. I may love you, but I cannot love your class. I cannot lift a hand to save—nay, I am compelled to help to drive them to their certain doom. *Bon Dieu!* Were the millions made for the few, or the few for the millions?”

“Be consoled, monsieur. I am no more an aristocrat than yourself. I am nothing and nobody.”

And I covered my face with my hands, ashamed of my useless life and the years I had wasted.

He almost sprang to the ceiling in his excitement. He clasped me to his heart, embracing me again and again.

“*Venez,*” he cried. “Even this big *salon* is too small to hold me. Let us go down to the lake and smoke a cigarette, and lay our plans with clearer heads than we have now. Come, my friend.”

I instantly acceded to his proposal, and we passed out of the shadow of the *salon* into the brilliant sunshine of the glowing noon outside.

CHAPTER X.

JOSEF AUFDERMAUER.

“Auf den Bergen wohnt die Freiheit, und am Meere wird man niemals Slave.”—GUTZKOW.

THERE was not a cloud to be seen in the deep blue sky as we passed out from under the shadow of the broad *porte-cochère*, and the rugged summit of Mount Pilate stood out darkly distinct from its brilliant sapphire background. As we sauntered down to the water's edge, lazily puffing the smoke from our scented cigarettes, I was struck by the extreme stillness of the emerald water and the unwonted richness of its coloring. Everything seemed sunk in repose except ourselves; the very

flies had ceased to buzz over the glassy surface of the water, unharassed by the fish which lay motionless under them, and the houses of Lucerne, their windows hidden behind green Venetian blinds, were slumbering with their inmates. The sun, high in the heavens, sent scorching rays down upon the burning earth, which, like a heated stove, seemed to give back what it received with usury. The only moving things were a solitary pleasure-boat, lazily propelled by the hands of some doubtlessly mad Englishman, and the smoke from a steamer bound for Flüelen, which, too weary to rise, fell darkly back upon its deck again.

"*Comme il fait chaud !*" said Moppert.

"How hot it is !" I repeated.

"It was cooler yonder in the *salon*," said my little friend, lighting a fresh cigarette. "We had better have stayed there, *mon ami*. Look how intensely blue the sky is, and how clearly defined the peaks of Mount Pilate ; yet I never remember this burning, sulphurous feel in the air since the night I found Gracieuse. And that was followed by a fearful storm, though there is no sign of a storm to-day."

"Not one," I answered, untying my cravat and loosening my collar. "It was certainly cooler in the *salon*, as you say ; nevertheless, I do not want to go back."

"Youth never does," said the Frenchman, quietly ; "it leaves that for age."

"Look at the boat yonder," I said ; "the Spaniards say that only dogs and Englishman go abroad in the sunshine of the noonday, but you may depend upon it the rower is right. If there is a breath of air to be found anywhere it will be upon the lake."

"*Me voilà tout prêt*," said Moppert, "and there are boats enough ; but where is the boatman ?"

I looked round. There were plenty of boats, big ones and little ones ; some drawn up upon the shore, some upon the water ; but not a single man to be seen anywhere, only a bare-footed boy, sitting under the shadow of a boat, nursing a baby.

"See, there's little Josef," said Moppert. "How is the baby, Josef ?"

"Pretty quiet just now, sir, thank you."

"That little lad is the eldest of seven," said Moppert. "We

call him the boy-mother, because his mother is bedridden, and he takes care of the others. Poor little lad, he is a cripple."

I drew out a piece of gold.

The boy's eyes glistened, but he put out no hand to receive it.

"Herre, I have done nothing to earn it."

"But you shall," I said; "fetch me a boatman."

"Fetch your father, Josef," said Moppert; "he is the best boatman in Lucerne; and take the money for the mother."

The boy took it now, though with much hesitation. "The mother is ill," he said, the color rushing to his face. Then he limped off, baby and all.

"When I have had a particularly hard time with Madame Papillote and her cat," said the Frenchman, gravely, "I come down to the shore and let that cripple lad teach me how to bear. He will not teach for long, monsieur. Such as he die early."

A moment more of waiting, and then Moppert cried:

"*Voici* Josef's father! Good-day, Aufdermauer."

The man touched his cap in acknowledgment of the greeting.

"Good-day, gentlemen," he responded. "Was it you who sent our Josef to request me to find you a boat?"

His use of the word "request" (*bitten*) instead of "command," the free-and-easy manner of his salutation, courteous, but with the courtesy of a lieutenant to his colonel—gentlemen both—impressed me. And I thought of William Tell, and wondered if he in any way resembled this man.

"Yes," I said, "we want a boat; find us one as soon as possible."

He did not speak for a moment, only turned his dark eyes up towards the sky, letting them rest on the summit of Mount Pilate.

"Mount Pilate has no collar on to-day," said Moppert. "I know the signs of the weather as well as you, Aufdermauer. To-day a child might row on *Vierwaldstätter-See*."

"Gentlemen," said the boatman, without replying to this remark, "my boat will be ready in five minutes; it is lying yonder. I will row you myself."

"We do not want a boatman," I said; "I shall not require you."

"Gentlemen," said the boatman again, after another rapid

glance at sky and lake, "I will take you out for a row myself and be glad to do it. I was born here on the shores of the lake and know what Mount Pilate means when he lifts a finger. You must not go out alone to-day."

Must not? I had been one of the crack rowers at Oxford, and this man's evident contempt for my prowess nettled me. I was a spoiled child of fortune, and his "must not" made me determined that I would.

"Get your boat ready," I repeated, haughtily. "We shall not want you."

His dark eyes flashed, then he said, with effort: "Sir, I have seen the piece of gold you gave our Josef, and I cannot take it away from my wife again, who has already shed tears of joy over it. Hear me a moment. Last summer, a young man, one of your countrymen, took his bride out alone upon the lake."

"What has that to do with me?"

"Only this, Herre," he continued, his great dark eyes flashing again; "only this, that the young wife sleeps now in the churchyard of Lucerne, and he, the harebrained husband, sleeps and wakes, both in a madhouse. You cannot turn a deaf ear to the spirits of our lakes; they will be heeded and obeyed."

I was staggered. For a moment I thought of yielding, then I raised my eyes to the sky and laughed at the absurdity of his fear. There was not a cloud in it as big as a man's hand. The boatman was only humbugging us in order to increase the value of his services.

"I am poor," continued the man—an obvious fact of which he did not need to inform us—"and can make use of every centime I earn, but I would rather not earn another franc this week than let you go out alone to-day."

Let us, forsooth! Who was this man, that he dared gainsay my wishes? The idle desire of half an hour ago had grown into a furious longing under the stimulus of opposition.

"If you cannot supply us with a boat, there are others who can, I suppose," I said, with simulated coolness. "For the rest, there was no need of your putting so much stress on your value. I should have paid you as much for your absence as for your presence."

The man's strong frame quivered with suppressed passion. "Sir, it is not that," he said; "you know it is not that. I am

paid already. There is my boat, it is unmoored, take it. The dear God knows I have done what I could."

In another minute or so we were in the boat, a rapidly increasing space of green water between it and the handsome figure of Josef Aufdermauer, who stood looking after us, his hand shading his eyes from the burning sunlight. I had heard his parting words to Moppert, who had followed me mechanically. "Herre," he said, "you are older and wiser than the *Engländer*; for Heaven's sake, keep your eye upon Mount Pilate."

I pulled hard at the oars in spite of the heat, ashamed to look at my friend, who sat motionless by the rudder and uttered not a word. I knew, too, that I lied when I said, a few minutes later:

"*Ce ne sont que des sottises, monsieur.* The fellow wanted to humbug us."

"You have said it," he answered, monotonously, using his customary words of assent, but with no assent in them now. "But how hot it is—how hot it is!"

It *was* hot, for a certainty. The sweat stood in thick beads upon my forehead. There was a suffocating feel in the air, which compelled us to draw our breath with effort or hold it with nature. The blue vault, arched so high above, nevertheless weighed upon us like an incubus, and the smoke from the chimneys in Lucerne, like the smoke of the steamer, too sluggish to rise, fell back again upon the city. I would have returned but for shame, and I resolved to keep a strict watch, and to pull for the shore on the slightest sign of disturbance in the sky. In the meantime I must arouse Moppert and induce him to look at me, instead of at Mount Pilate.

"Tell me the rest of your story," I said; "I can row and listen too."

My ruse was successful. His face brightened. His anxious eye cleared. He turned his head away from the shore and the two bugbears there, the mountain and the mountain's interpreter, and looked at me instead.

I put into my face a confidence I did not feel. I smiled his fears away, and, rowing hard, in order to lose sight of Josef Aufdermauer, encouraged him to begin.

We were now alone upon the lake. The solitary boat with its occupant had disappeared, and the quiet around us was un-

disturbed except by the splash of my oars. Moppert began to narrate, and soon, in the interest of his story, which made the beads on his forehead swell into heavy drops and fall, we had both forgotten Josef Aufdermauer and his warning to keep an eye upon Mount Pilate.

CHAPTER XI.

THE REASON WHY.

“Et via vix tandem voci laxata dolore est.”—VIRGIL (*Æneid*).

“Chi può dir com’ egli arde, è un picciol fuoco.”—PETRARCA.

“THE little dog did not die, monsieur. I washed the blood from its wounds, put it in the bed beside me, and let it lie there until the morning.

“Whether it slept or not, I cannot tell. The storm which Mount Pilate had announced broke upon us, and during it sleep was impossible for me. My little room was illuminated by a light more intense than that of the sun to-day, and the crash of the thunder was so terrible and continuous that more than once I thought Lucerne must have fallen, as did the walls of Jericho.

“When it subsided, I arose from my sleepless couch, and looked long at my unique bedfellow.

“It was not sleeping then. It was gazing up at me with dark, soft, trustful eyes, for all the world like those of my lost Gracieuse.

“Then I stooped and took it in my arms and said: ‘See, little one! Thou and I art outcasts; both of us have been cruelly ill-used by those whom we would have loved and honored. Let us live henceforth together, foregoing the vengeance I have sworn during this night. Didst thou, too, understand the words of the thunder when it said: “Vengeance is mine?”’

“It wagged its tail, monsieur, just as if it had, and licked my hand; and so we sealed our compact, Gracieuse and I, and the dog became my own.

“We led a harassed life though, for the next week or two. Madame Papillote extorted a most exorbitant price for its board, putting me also upon short rations to make up for it in another

way. As for the cat—monsieur, I confess—there is yet a little bottle of poison in my cupboard, hidden behind the *tisane*, and a bit of rope.

“We could not stand it at last. I was obliged to seek other lodgings for Gracieuse. So I took her to the hut of a charcoal-burner, and left her there in charge of the man’s blind daughter, Gabrielle. I was forced to hide her for fear of meeting her former master and would-be murderer; but every day, weather permitting, I took my promenade in the wood, spending my happiest hours there with Gracieuse, both of us what the Germans call *vogelfrei*.

“I must not forget to say that I sent back the blue leather collar, its costly gold embroidery all stained with blood, to Monsieur le Prince. And I added a few lines written in blood, too—the blood of the dog. They were but a few: only to the effect that, if we ever came into contact, it should be his fault; but *if* we did, Heaven have mercy on him, for I would have none.

“How much I learned to love the dog, monsieur, I hardly venture to tell you. You would think it folly, no doubt. But the pretty creature loved me, and seemed to know that it was I who had saved it. It would run from Gabrielle to meet me, frantic with delight, and on those days that I could not come, it would refuse its food, sitting with drooping tail and ears in a corner, an image of desolation.

“Thus the months slipped by, and the golden leaves turned to russet brown, and, dropping one by one, were covering the earth with a brown mantle to protect it from the winter’s cold.

“I noticed this as I walked through the wood towards the hut, by the side of a little rippling rivulet imbedded in a stony couch softened by moss. No bird was singing, but my heart supplied the deficiency, and sang a duet with the water, as it murmured of the clear lake towards which it was hastening. My heart felt unusually blithe that day; the air was fresh though soft, permeated by that peculiarly invigorating element which only autumn yields.

“Monsieur, if you are not tired, row a little harder for a moment, that my nerves may be steadied by the feeling of *doing* something. Did you ever feel particularly well just before an illness, or particularly happy just when Fate was raising the knife to cut the throat of your happiness?

“I was surprised to find the cottage-door close shut; it was usually wide open to welcome me. And why was Gracieuse so tardy? and what had silenced Gabrielle’s clear song? Yet I smiled; I smiled, monsieur, as I tapped at the door. Ha! ha! the soft wind had carried away the sound of my coming; they were not expecting me, and all the greater would be their delight.

“My rap was answered, but—by what? By the piteous, terrified, imploring howl of a dog! Then silence so profound that the gentle ripple of the rivulet sounded like the roar of a cataract.

“I tried the door; it was fastened.

“I knocked again; loudly, angrily, imperatively. My heart’s rapid beat sounded as ominous as the tick of the death-watch, and the sweat stood on my brow in thicker drops than it does to-day. Was that fierce, harsh voice mine, saying: ‘*Gracieuse, ma petite, sois tranquille! C’est moi.*’

“The next moment I was in the one room of the cottage; half of it stove, on the top of which poor blind Gabrielle slept. Gabrielle was not there; only Gracieuse, crouched in a corner, her bright eyes wide with terror.

“Monsieur, row a little faster still, if you please. I *must* feel like *doing something* while I speak. Oh, the pain, the pain of this inaction! the torture of being forced to *wait* instead of fight!

“I suppose I had broken open the door myself. I cannot tell. I only know that I was there, as I should have been if stone walls had tried to shut me out. There are crises in our lives, monsieur, when we can do *anything*, when every earthly consideration, every conventional bond, nay, even apparently insuperable obstacles, are as powerless to restrain us as the thread of a spider’s web.

“There were two or three men in the room. I *felt* their presence, for my eyes saw nothing but Gracieuse. I knew, too, who they were; for, monsieur, if we are warned instinctively of the nearness of what we love, we feel still more infallibly the contact of what we hate.

“But I spoke quietly—oh, so quietly!—raising my hat and bowing low as I said: ‘Gentlemen, pardon my intrusion; I am gone again in a moment. It is but to fetch my dog that I come.’ And I added, more softly still: ‘*Gracieuse, ma petite, sois tranquille! C’est moi.*’

"I stooped and took her in my arms, monsieur, and the trance of terror into which she had fallen dispersed somewhat when she felt my caress. I stroked her silky hair and pressed her to my heart, turning to go without another word—as noiselessly, as submissively as if I had been an unhallowed intruder into a sanctuary and these men its high priests. When I passed their chief, I bowed low again and entreatingly, as if beseeching him to forgive my sacrilege. For oh, monsieur, love is very powerful; it can teach us to bear profoundest humiliation, forcing us even to lick the dust from the feet of a Prince de Pöbeldowski!

"I had only taken a few steps, when a voice, as quiet as mine, called on me to stop. You have heard its liquid music, monsieur. Could Satan, tempting Christ in the wilderness, have found a voice better suited for his purpose than that?

"‘By what right are you its master?’ said the prince.

"I turned and looked straight into the face I hated so intensely. I saw the triumphant sparkle in his eye, the quivering of his nostril, the smile curling his lips—like the smile of a tiger ready to spring. And I forgot my humanity as I looked, in the brutish instinct to fly at his throat and cling there, until he, or I, or both of us, were dead."

I had been rowing almost as rapidly as the Frenchman had been narrating—the high tension of feeling into which he had worked us both passing on into my muscles until I grew insensible to fatigue. Now, as he paused, I paused also, resting on my oars and letting the boat drive with the current. We had long since lost sight of Lucerne.

"‘By what right?’ said the prince.

"‘By a right divine and sacred,’ I answered—and now my voice was choked with passion and tremulous with fury—‘the right of having saved it from a cruel death.’

"‘A very poetical right, truly,’ laughed the prince—his companions laughing with him—‘but hardly a legal one, monsieur. I bought and paid for the dog, and *my* right, though psychologically less interesting than yours, is more likely to be regarded. But I have no time to refer the matter to others. I am already *en route* for Hungary. I must settle it at once.’

"In spite of the sneer in his tone, his words seemed to point out a hope. In spite of the cruel gleam in his eye, I seized the hope and clung to it.

“‘Let me buy the dog,’ I cried, eagerly. ‘I am poor, but I will borrow money. I will work, I will starve, to pay the price you name.’

“‘The dog is priceless,’ he answered; ‘there is not its fellow in Europe. You might sell yourself and fail to realize its value. But for lack of time, I would have you arrested for dog-stealing.’

“‘Monsieur,’ I answered, ‘have a care. I am a soldier of France.’

“‘So much the better,’ he replied; ‘we will settle it on the spot. It was you, therefore, who sent me back the collar and the words accompanying it.’

“‘Monsieur,’ I said, beseechingly (do not think meanly of me, my friend, it was for Gracieuse), ‘those words were written in hot anger: forget them, as I will.’

“‘I never forget,’ he answered, ‘and never forgive. Those words were written in blood; I shall give them back in blood, to-day.’

“I trembled. Monsieur, I am not afraid to die. I have stood firm at the cannon’s mouth and rushed forward upon fixed bayonets with a cry of delight, but now I turned sick with fear. There was something impending over me I should not be able to bear.

“‘I make a proposition to you, monsieur,’ continued the prince. ‘Look at the dog, she knows me better than you do; she knows that I never forgive.’

“It was true. Her fear of him, *pauvre petite*, was greater than her confidence in me. She had sprung from my arms and was lying crouched at his feet—not in hope of averting her doom: oh, my God! not in hope!

“‘She used to be my favorite,’ he went on, smiling that cruel smile of his, ‘and she ventured to disobey me. I punished her. Look here.’

“He opened his beautiful right hand and showed me the palm. There was a slight scar upon it.

“‘She ventured further to resent her punishment, monsieur, and then—well, you know what then.’

“Yes, I knew, I knew! But, like a prudent soldier, I spared my forces until every tittle of them would be needed for action.

“‘I spoke of a proposition, monsieur,’ continued the prince.

‘If you accede to it, I will make you a free gift of Donna, unharmed.’

“There was no sign of hope in his words now, not a particle. I waited.

“‘I have been seeking you and Donna, monsieur, many a long day,’ he said. ‘I had nearly given you up in despair. But fortune favored me; she always does.’

“I waited still.

“‘This morning—only this morning—one of my people recognized Donna with a blind girl on the outskirts of Lucerne.’

“Oh, unhappy Gabrielle! How wilt thou bear to hear what thou hast done?

“‘Only blood will satisfy me,’ he continued; ‘yours or the dog’s. I will accept a propitiatory sacrifice. Once she was my favorite. I liked to feel her lick my hand and rub her head against my knee.’

“Oh, great God, are there not chords even in this man’s heart which may be touched to tenderness! Oh, blessed and pitiful Virgin, he had once a mother and thou a son!

“‘I give you your choice,’ he continued. ‘Bare your back to my executioner; we will only flog you to within an inch of your life; and Donna shall be yours.’ And he added: ‘Do *you* like to have her lick your hand and rub her head against your knee?’

“Only think of this, *mon ami*—of this to *me*, a soldier of France!

“‘I cast your infamous proposition back in your teeth!’ I cried; and now I rushed upon him, ready to struggle to the death. ‘I am a soldier and an officer; my honor is dearer to me than my life.’

“‘You have chosen,’ he answered, and, as he spoke, I was seized by his vile companions, who held me as in a vise.

“Monsieur, I was one, and they were two; I was old and comparatively feeble, they were young and vigorous; yet twice I wrenched my pinioned arms loose ere I was conquered.

“It was *he* who struck her—*he*, who had once loved to feel her lick his hand and rub her soft head against his knee! When I saw the red blood spout from the wound, my spirit succumbed as well as my body; my love was stronger than my honor. I cried out: ‘Do with me as you will, but spare *her*!’

"I yielded in vain, monsieur. He only struck again, laughing and saying, 'You have chosen, and I know now which punishment is the greater.'

"She was not long in dying. The first blow, or the terror of it, stunned her on the spot, for she uttered no further sound. When he paused and they liberated me, we all stood still a moment—the murderers as well as I—with bated breath and paling faces, for something terrible seemed to rise up from the spot, red with her life-blood, and to stand there in the midst of us.

"No one spoke a word when I lifted her and pressed her to my heart. No one sought to hinder me. I passed unmolested through the midst of them, opened the door of the cottage, and stepped out into the porch.

"There I turned, quite tearless and composed, and said quietly—more quietly than ever—for God was speaking, and all creation holding its breath to listen:

"'Prince, we shall meet again, and it will be my turn then. Look—and I raised the dog high—look at the debt you have incurred, and remember that it must all be paid to the uttermost farthing.'

"I buried her, monsieur, in a little dell in the forest, where, over her grave, violets would spring and birds warble. But I shed no tear over the spot, nor uttered one moan, nor chanted one requiem. The heavier a blow is the more it stuns, and feeling at its intensest is as silent as the tomb.

"Only a dog, monsieur, only a dog, and yet God knows—!"

As he ceased, plucking fiercely at his moustache, I heard a deep sigh float towards us over the water, and a muttered sound, which seemed to issue from the base of the mountains. The air was agitated, and two or three huge fish leaped suddenly, close to the boat's prow. I looked up to the sky and saw that its blue was beflecked by many a flying cloud, all hastening towards the sun, now strongly inclining towards the west. "Monsieur," I cried, "we have forgotten the boatman's warning. I cannot see Mount Pilate, but is it not a certain sign of a storm when the fish are so restless? Had I not better pull for the shore?"

CHAPTER XII.

THE FÖHN.

“O solve me the riddle of human life,
The riddle as terrible as it is old,—
Tell me what is the meaning of man?
Whence doth he come? and for where is he bound?”

Translated from HEINE.

I HAD hardly uttered these words before the air was darkened and the sun as completely hidden as if he had already sunk behind the mountains. Huge masses of cloud covered the sky, which had turned to an indescribable color. It was neither purple nor red, but looked as if it were illuminated by some gigantic and infernal firework shining through a dense veil of mist. And it spread and spread, until not only the firmament, but also the surrounding mountains and the water itself, might have been nothing more tangible than the smoke of hell's own fire.

And in the midst of this our boat stood still—struck motionless; wrapped round with a brightly gleaming pall.

We not only felt the lurid death all around us, but we smelt and tasted it too. Upon our heads, upon our hands, upon our lungs, it weighed with crushing power. It was not so much the water that we feared; it was the air.

Nature was dumb, and with a menacing finger on our lips struck us dumb too.

I tried my utmost to break the awful charm, but only a feeble sigh issued from my loaded breast.

As if even this faint sound had subdued the spell, something unseen and terrible, perhaps the spirit of the lake, sighed a deep echo. A large fish sprang so high and close to me that the water it disturbed splashed my face. The air became violently agitated, and a deep bell rang out a solemn warning from the shore. A phantom sound, ringing out our knell.

I looked at Moppert. With wide, dilated eyes he looked back at me.

Then, with a gasp, my voice came back to me. "Good God!" I cried, "tell me what to do!" I instinctively felt that man's help would be in vain.

"*Mon ami*," said Moppert, in a voice as hoarse and hopeless as the croak of a raven, "do you know what that bell is saying?"

I could not answer him. I clutched the oars again. If I had to die, I would die fighting.

"It is the herald of the Föhn," continued Moppert. "It is to tell the people to put out their fires and candles and to pray for the souls of those upon the lake."

For their *souls* only, and I was yet so young, so young!

I saw Moppert, with the lurid light upon his pallid face, looking round wildly as if to find some ray of hope in any one point of the compass. I saw him cross himself, and clasp his hands, and bow his head, at finding none.

"Let us pray," he said. "Catholic or Protestant, there is but one God, and he is almighty."

I was still so young, so young! I would break that sombre curtain and die, at least, in the open. I would not be pent up in a grave while yet alive.

I pulled at the oars. The boat moved again.

I pulled at the oars till they bent in my hands. We were probably rushing upon death; but anything was better than to sit still in hopeless waiting.

In the meantime the sighs from the unseen spirit had increased in volume and intensity, until at last they rose to piercing shrieks, which might have been uttered under the agony of some infernal rack, beyond even the power of a spirit to endure. And now the placid water began to shudder, and to rock us as fiercely upon her bosom as an angry nurse might rock an unruly child.

The lurid light had faded, and the darkness grew so intense that I could no longer see Moppert. The horror of being quite alone in the midst of this awful exhibition of God's power was too great to be endured, and I cried out to him to come to me.

He came at once, creeping along the bottom of the boat, until his hand touched my knee and his warm breath was on my

cheek. And we clung together, comforted even in this crisis by that human sympathy which is the most precious thing God has given us, and which can help us even in the agony of death.

"Forgive me," I said; "forgive the wicked obstinacy which refused to heed honest warning, and which has cost us both our lives."

"Forgive *me*," he answered; "I was older, and ought to have been wiser."

Alas! he spoke in the past tense already.

Then the black pall shrouding earth and heaven was rent asunder for a moment by a flaming sword of fire. I saw his face again once more, and he saw mine.

He was looking his fate full in her terrible eyes with the calm, resigned look of a soldier and a hero. He was not afraid to die. Yet, when we embraced, my first and last passionate prayer went up to God to save him, and let me alone bear the punishment.

The vivid light had hardly been succeeded by darkness which might be felt, when the mountains answered it in a prolonged roar which almost deafened us, for Rigi and Frohnalp and Uri Rothstock were lifting up their deep-toned voices in a hoarse appeal to God.

The waves ran so high now, and our frail boat was rocked so violently in the awful cradle of the deep, that we could hardly keep our seats at all, and the oars fell from my hands. Moppert was praying alone as we knelt down together with clasped hands. I could not pray. My mind was full of strange thoughts—yet not strange, perhaps, there, upon the threshold of eternity.

For I thought how short my life had been, and how sinfully wasted, and of how little value was my million of inheritance at this supreme moment—an inheritance which would not buy even one short day wherein to repent.

Thought how little worth was anything that men deem valuable—worldly honor, worldly riches, name and fame. Thought of that treasure in heaven, which my nurse had told me was the only thing of any importance for human beings, who must die.

Thought of that dear nurse herself, with her soft, rippling hair, and gentle face, and strong hands, forcing me to be good. Thought of her one burst of passion, and her penitence, and of

the cruel thing that weaned a brother from a sister, and must answer that.

Thought of my long-forgotten nursery high up among the chimney-pots, with its one print of sick Lazarus at the rich man's gate. Thought of a girl's saucy face and sobbing longing to be good, and of a French *chanson* and its gay refrain.

Thought of my neglected sisters, and of my father in Ballyacora Hall, and of what they would say when the news of my death reached them. And of the duke's daughter, to whom I should never be married after all.

Thought of my noble friends and of the life to which they had introduced me, and of a certain *billet doux* in my dressing-case with a burning cheek yet. Thought of certain floggings at Eton, and of the pattern of the paper in my room at home, and of the dinner I had ordered at the hotel and which would never be eaten, and of Aileen's moist kisses on my cheek.

Thought of Patsy, my groom, and of the licking I had given him, and whether he would remember or whether he would forget. Thought of a thousand things as ridiculous as these, until I laughed aloud, with my hand still in Moppert's and our boat still rocking in that awful cradle of the deep.

Thought of the beautiful lady on the promenade at Lucerne, and of the devil beside her, until, looking up, I saw them both—I swear it—the tears yet undried upon her cheeks, his lips white with passion, hers with terror.

Then I cried out to Moppert, for this last was more than I could endure.

As I cried, something struck us a terrible blow. Our boat rose right up in the water, and then fell back again, casting us into the seething abyss. I lost my hold of Moppert in a fierce struggle to retain something I was losing—I hardly knew what. Then the struggle ceased, and I fell into a deep sleep. And oh, what perfect rest, what peace, wondrous and inexpressible, came to me with death!

CHAPTER XIII.

A NEW THÉRÈSE.

“Ach! so grenzt des Geistes höh’res Leben
 Oft an Tod, und ohne Wiederkehr
 Sinkt, wenn wir am bessern Daseyn schweben,
 Psyche tief hinab ins Sinnenmeer!
 Selig, wem des Herzens Flammentriebe
 Früh sich läutern zu der reineren Liebe!”

K. W. JUSTI.

WHAT a dream I had had, to be sure! Not of *her* either; all about the nearly forgotten Thérèse and that foolish French *chanson* of hers. The refrain was in my ears when I awoke; soft and slow, as if being still sung in the years that were gone.

“Tra, la, la!” Where was I, pray? Where had I been last?

Memory, although shaky and confused, appeared in answer to the summons. Where had I been last? Why, at the bottom of Lucerne, dead as a stone!

True; then where was I now? In heaven or in—the other place?

I listened. There were sounds falling on my ear besides the distant sound of song—harsh, unmelodious, guttural sounds. Bass and shrill treble. A man’s voice and a woman’s.

Do people remain men and women in heaven? No, we have Biblical authority for asserting that they neither marry nor are given in marriage there, but are as the angels. This, then, was—the other place.

Oh, how their hard hands hurt me! how mercilessly they pulled me hither and thither! how they mouthed and maltreated the noble language of the fatherland!

And now the distant song swelled, coming nearer and nearer, until at last it resolved itself into words:

A la fêt’ du hameau,
 Ah! comm’ c’est beau!
 Tout’s les filles
 Vont, au son du violon,

Su' l'vert gazon
 Danser en rond :
 Tra, dera, la, la, la, la, la, la,
 N'faut pas danser comme ça,
 la, la ;
 L'Amour vous attend là.

Then this was purgatory.

No, it was heaven after all! A new presence was bending over me. A new atmosphere, delicately perfumed — ugh! the former had been smoke-sullied—saluted my nose. A glow was rising to my face in glad response to a warm ray of sunshine.

I raised my heavy lids and dimly saw a rainbow face: two smiling eyes in which tears yet sparkled; the whitest of pearly teeth gleaming between coral lips.

"Thérèse," I said, "is this heaven, and are you dead too?"

I say, I *said*, but it was only my lips which moved, no sound was audible.

"See, Väterli; see, Fleurette; he is moving, he is trying to speak! He will not die!" cried an eager voice. Then arose a hubbub of sound, during which my mind wandered off again into a region where thought is not. A horror of great darkness fell upon me, in the midst of which I was only sensible of a struggle back to the light.

It was a man's voice which penetrated the shadows afresh and opened anew a window in my brain. He spoke the Swiss *patois*, but slowly and carefully, as if his tongue had not always been accustomed to the gutturals.

"The Herr Doctor was not at home, sayest thou?"

"No, father, but I left word that he should come."

"Thou went away crying and came back singing, *Mädel*. Thou art like thy dead mother, who died because she couldn't sing any more."

"Ah, that would kill me, too," said the girl.

"I believe thee well. But see, the gentleman is opening his eyes again—a foolish Englishman, whom Providence has cared for beyond his deserts, doubtless."

"He—he does not look foolish," said the girl, charming open my heavy lids anew, as she bent over me and gently touched my face with her hand.

"You are better. You are safe," she cried, with confidence. "We hardly want the doctor now."

To which I answered, slowly and painfully :

"Thérèse, why did you go away, and why have you come back to me?"

And I added, striving hard to be heard :

"And why do you speak this ugly language, instead of your own, which is so soft and musical?"

"*Er kennt mich ja !*" she cried, amazed. "Yes, I am Thérèse ; how do you know it?"

"He is wandering in his mind," said the man, advancing nearer to me. Then he continued, in loud, emphatic English :

"I am an Englishman, sir. Me and some others pulled you out of the lake an hour or two ago. 'Twas a close shave, but it's all right now."

Not all right. Anything but right. For, as surely as the other was Thérèse, so surely this was William. I tried to rise, but was so tightly bound that I could not.

"Am I alive?"

"Ay, alive sure enough, and if not kicking yet, you will be soon, doubtless."

Kicking! Had I any legs to kick with? I was conscious of none.

"Give him a drop of cherry brandy," said the man, turning to speak to some one behind him; "he's going again. And, Thérèse, run and open the door, *Mädel*. I hear the doctor coming at last."

These were the last intelligible words I heard during many and many a day.

For Feeling, angry at her long banishment, now came back with a rush, running fiercely through every tortured nerve, and leaving behind her a burning track of pain.

The other senses fled while she racked me, or remained behind only to confound and mislead.

At last Feeling, tired of her cruel work, paused to rest, and I fell into a deep sleep.

It was evening when I awoke, roused from slumber by a distant murmur of many voices, the flowing of water, and certain dull thuds which were incomprehensible. I listened until curiosity overcame listlessness, and I opened my eyes to try if I could see.

A dimly burning lamp, depending from a beam in the ceiling,

gave light enough to show that I was lying on a narrow bed in a large, barely furnished room, and so closely smothered in blankets and loaded with coverlets that it was no wonder I could not move. An empty chair stood by my bedside, a huge wardrobe and huger stove completed the furniture. On the wooden, roughly carved walls hung some prints of impossible Virgins and impossible Infants. At the foot of my bed stood a woman, short and dumpy, low-browed and long-chinned, contemplating me with the dull stare of soulless curiosity. As my eyes met those of this woman, she opened her mouth wider than they, but uttered not a word.

Between wardrobe and stove was a door slightly ajar, through which issued the sounds I have mentioned and also the fumes of unmistakable tobacco-smoke and the smell of *lager bier*. As I looked and pondered, this door opened further still, admitting the tall, slight figure of a maiden.

"Fleurette," she said, softly, "one has need of thee."

This maiden was dressed in a short blue petticoat and scarlet *mieder* (bodice), the latter tightly laced over as exquisite a bust as sculptor ever modelled. Her shoulders and dimpled arms were bare. Her shapely little feet hardly seemed to touch the ground they trod on, while her rich black hair, tied with a scarlet ribbon, fell in one broad plait far below her waist.

Thérèse! Thérèse in Swiss costume! I was certain of it. The same mobile face; the same saucy poise of the head; the same contradictory and ever-changing expression, for at first the brown eyes were laughing, while the lips remained sedate and grave; and now the eyes swam in tears, and the lips were smiling.

Thérèse. Why had she come back to me, now that another love had taken possession of my heart?

William too. William, looking over her shoulder with a grave, benevolent satisfaction, right into my face. I should hardly have shared this satisfaction but for the other love I spoke of. Now I did, and smiled my congratulations.

"How I hated you once, William," I said, as a second masculine head—a young and handsome one—appeared in the doorway, and an impatient masculine voice summoned back Thérèse. The beer, the voice said, was hardly worth the drinking without the *Mädel*.

"But now," I added, magnanimously, "I congratulate you

with all my heart." And I tried to lift the heavy bedclothes and to put out my hand.

"Sir," he said, amazed, "I am William, doubtless, but I do not know you from Adam."

"I used to pinch your calves," I said, looking down at those members, now shrunk and lean.

He looked down at them himself and then at me, and his amazement deepened.

"I'm all abroad yet," he said; "I can't make neither head nor tail of it."

"Do you remember going away in a cab with Thérèse, and a little passionate boy looking on, full of rage and grief?"

"Ah-h!"

"And a gloomy London house with fog outside often, and always fog within?"

"Ah-h-h!"

"I am glad you married her, William. I am glad you seem so happy and comfortable. I am glad—"

But my magnanimity was checked by a sudden reflection. I looked again at William. Some seventeen years had passed since I last saw him, and their footsteps were plainly enough traced upon his bronzed face; whereas Thérèse was younger, brighter, prettier than ever.

"She is not your wife, is she?" I inquired, somewhat confusedly.

"My wife died sixteen year ago—sixteen year ago," he repeated, with a deep sigh.

"And *this* Thérèse?"

"This Thérèse"—and now his hard face softened, and a radiant light came into his eyes—"this one is my little *Mädel*—my *Töchterlein*."

It was my turn now to utter a long-drawn "Ah!"

"I reckon I know you now," he continued, "and I thank God A'mighty once more that 'twas me as drew you out of the water, for *she* were fond of you."

He paused again, putting his hand to his furrowed brow as if the word had aroused a host of painful recollections; then continued, in a more cheerful voice:

"You *was* a Tartar in them days, Master Charles, sure enough. Such a little chap, too, to be so much in love! I've laughed

about it many a time with her, until we both laughed no longer, because—”

He broke off anew to put one arm around his daughter's waist and lift the other to her round cheek as she came up to his side. How oddly the action affected me as they stood thus a moment together—the new William and the old Thérèse!

CHAPTER XIV.

MY LITTLE MISTRESS.

“Cari sunt liberi, propinqui, familiares : sed omnes omnium caritates patria una complexa est.”—CICERO, *De Officiis*.

WE became very good friends in due time, this Thérèse and I. For it was she who nursed me, aided by William, until I could stand upon my own shaky legs again.

I wonder if there is any connection for the time, except that of husband and wife, more close and intimate than the connection of patient and nurse? I wonder if there is any more dangerous, when both are young?

Not that there was any danger for us—not the remotest. I had made her my confidante. I had enlisted her warm sympathies on behalf of the beautiful, unfortunate lady whom I loved.

Whom I loved. Is love necessarily the growth of months? Can it not spring up, like Jonah's gourd, in a night?

It did not in the least interfere with my liking for my pretty nurse. I liked well, I confess it, to see her by my bedside. I liked her tyranny. I liked our daily quarrels, specially when they were over. Above all, I liked—couldn't have done without—the makings-up.

I had found out the meaning of the mysterious thuds, and why tobacco smoke and *lager bier* perpetually perfumed the place. William was owner and landlord of a small public-house (*Schenke*), a favorite resort for men of all ages. Thérèse was its pretty, feminine attraction.

It was morning. The sunshine was streaming in, warm and bright, through the diamond-shaped window-panes, tinging Thérèse's black hair with a golden glitter and making the knitting-needles in her busy hand twinkle like fireflies as they flashed hither and thither in the light.

A question which had haunted me for long—ever since I could think at all of other than my pain—hovered on my lips, but, like a coward, lacked courage to go further.

“Thérèse,” I said, breaking the silence in order to brace myself, “to-day I really feel as if I were going to get better.”

“*Ei, natürlich,*” she answered, laughing, “we never meant to let you die, monsieur.”

I watched the gray stocking lengthening in her hands, resolving to speak at every turn. Thrice I even uttered an inarticulate sound; thrice Thérèse’s bright eyes were turned towards me, and her rosy lips opened to an “*Eh, monsieur?*” thrice I cleared my throat, and made believe that that was all I wanted.

“If you will be good, monsieur,” said Thérèse, after consulting my watch and forcing me to swallow two tablespoonfuls of a disgusting mixture—enjoying my sufferings, the minx, with all her heart—and won’t get excited, why, perhaps I’ll tell you something.”

Perhaps, forsooth! That was her way of tormenting me. Nevertheless, a touch of earnestness in her saucy voice made me turn pale and tremble.

“*Ei! ei!* if you are going to look like that, monsieur, I’ll run away and send old Fleurette to come and sit beside you. You will go off to sleep again like a lamb with Fleurette; for”—with an irresistible little grimace—“it makes one sleepy only to look at her.”

“Wait till I am well, *mein Fräulein*, and see if I don’t pay you out then for your treatment of me now.”

“Treatment! *Der Herr hat gut sprechen.* I should like to know who would have given him his drops so regularly, or mixed his mustard plasters so strong, or applied the leeches to his aching temples, if *I* hadn’t been there!”

“*Grausames Geschöpf!* It is to you, then, that I am indebted for the tortures inflicted upon me! Never mind, I promise not to forget it.”

“No fear of that,” said Thérèse, tossing her pretty head and threatening me with a sharp-pointed knitting-needle. “*Die Herren Engländer* are known all the world over for their profound memory for injuries, and the extreme shortness of their memories for benefits they have received. Even my father, who has lived long enough with warmer-hearted folk to know better,

never remembers my good deeds when he is angry ; but only the one little act, hardly worth noticing, which has aroused his ire."

"It's easy to say that, but you forget, mam'selle, that you are half English yourself."

"No, monsieur, not a quarter English, thank Heaven ! All my heart belongs to Switzerland, and if I had to live anywhere else I should pine away and die. My father tried when I was little to instil English dulness into me, and tries, now that I am big, to scold me into being as hard and stiff and *kaltblütig* as his countrywomen. I have seen many of them in Lucerne, and you would think (for they are as cold and hard-looking as the *Gletscher* upon our mountains) that they had never learned to laugh or cry or sing or dance."

She was at a stumbling-block in her stocking just now, and bent her dark head over it for a moment without speaking.

"*Ach !* only a slipped stitch, monsieur, which reminds me that I have been told not to talk to you, and not to let you talk too much either."

"*Unsinn*, maiden ! Go on."

"Monsieur thinks he has but to command and that of course Thérèschen must obey. But Thérèse doesn't like to obey ; she likes to have some one to tease and torment all the livelong day. Ah, monsieur need not make such big eyes. I am as hard-hearted as a stone."

"Wait till I am well again."

"Besides," she went on, "what pleasure can it be to a warm-blooded Swiss girl to talk to a cold-blooded *Engländer*, or to try and make *him* understand what love of country means, nor with what joy and pride we Swiss look up to our noble mountains, knowing that there is nothing else half so beautiful on earth?"

"What an impassioned little patriot it is !"

"How you Englishmen must hate your England, monsieur, to run away from it as you do, as if there was pestilence in the very wind which blows over it. *Hu !* I have heard of it—a dark, gray country, where there is neither summer nor winter ; only fog and mist and smoke. France is better than that, though not half so good as Switzerland. Wouldn't monsieur give half of his fortune, now, to have been born in this wonderful country of ours ?"

"England is a more wonderful country still, Thérèse."

"Oh, I will not talk to monsieur any more. I will sing a French *chanson*, as gay as the song of the skylark; all about love and laughter, where the woods dance to the measure. Monsieur would make me else, in the twinkling of an eye, as dull and dismal as he is himself. I had nearly lost my temper. I will go look for it, and find it again in a song."

How wonderfully pretty the girl looked, as she broke out in a gleeful melody, her dark eyes flashing, her cheeks bright with unwonted color (she had inherited her mother's Southern clear sallowness), and the sunshine playing hide-and-seek in her raven hair! Now in words, now in song, how continuously and uninterruptedly the sparkling stream flowed from between her scarlet lips! I forgot everything again but lazy pleasure and content as I lay watching her.

"It is strange," she continued, after a short pause—while I observed, and wondered at it, that when she was silent her hands ceased to work too, and when the stream of talk bubbled out most irrepressibly her fingers played a quick accompaniment—"it is strange, though, that my father will talk of 'Old England'" —these last two words were brought out with the prettiest foreign accent imaginable—"as if he loved it, and my grandmother wore out her old heart in pining for *la belle France*! Monsieur, why do you sigh? You are disobeying me and getting excited."

"You have not told me yet what you said you would."

"Because you are not good. Your cheek is flushed; perhaps a leech—"

"I am not going to stand it. If you venture to bring one of the horrible creatures into the room—"

"Monsieur, there is a bottle of them in the cupboard."

"Then I desire that they be instantly thrown into the lake."

"Thrown into the lake! Why, it would be as much as my life is worth to attempt it. I know I should be thrown in after them. But, perhaps, that, too, is what monsieur desires."

"I desire that you will sit down beside me again and tell me instantly the news you promised."

"O Weh! O Weh! I never thought to find the tales I have heard of English ingratitude so speedily verified. Yesterday, and all the days before, it was, '*Liebe Thérèse, bitte, bitte,*' or '*Thérèschen, du bist mein rettender Engel,*' or '*Kind, ich werde*

nie vergessen was du mir gethan,' and to-day, nothing but desires and commands and threats. Oh, *die Herren Engländer* are all the same, every one of them! I will go and cook the *Suppe* and send Fleurette, who is as deaf as a post, to come and sit beside you."

"Send Fleurette at your peril," I rejoined, seizing the perverse little hand and pressing it to my lips. "And now that I have you fast, tell me the news this moment."

What a strange girl she was! her mood as variable as the zig-zag flight of the swallow. She had been scolding me before with a contradictory sparkle in her eye; now it flashed out a lightning ray, and her lip quivered. She rose up from her seat by my bedside as haughtily as an offended princess.

"What is the matter, Thérèse?"

"Monsieur is not in England," she answered, turning away her flushing cheek, "and will have to learn that his commands are not law in Switzerland. Sit down again? Certainly not, until monsieur has learned to control himself a little, and to behave like a gentleman."

"Good heavens! what have I done?"

"Done! Is monsieur lord of Europe that he ventures to assume a tone so arrogant—to command where he should obey?"

"Well," I said, falling back upon my pillow, "the man who marries you will have his hands full?"

"And the woman who marries you, monsieur, had need be born without a heart at all."

"I've nothing further to say, Thérèse."

"Nor have I. Except—except that I was told not to excite you; and your cheek is flushed, and your eye bright, and your breathing hurried and unequal. Let me give you your medicine, monsieur, and let us quarrel when you are better."

She was looking at me now with a softened and a troubled eye, and the hand with which she smoothed my pillow trembled a little. I was quick to seize my advantage, and cunning enough to try a new form of inducement.

"Thérèschen, you can make some allowance for a sick man, cannot you? I am afraid of the news you have promised me, but I am still more afraid of the uncertainty. It is that which is agitating me. Be good to me, Thérèse. *Do* tell me."

"There," she said, smiling, yet pricked to the quick by my

tone of supplication, "you have given me tit for tat with a vengeance, monsieur. I am as submissive to your *do* as I was impervious to your *must*. But get agitated at your peril! The moment you begin, I am gone."

How could I help getting agitated? My heart began to beat quick and fast; my eyes grew dim. Yet surely she had no bad news to communicate. Surely no one could contemplate the terrible solemnity of death with those laughing eyes and that dimpling cheek.

"You will let me take up the heel of my stocking first, will you not, monsieur?" she said, "and then I can talk on without interruption."

But this was a little too strong a strain on my endurance. I broke down under it, and cried out petulantly: "If you only knew, Thérèse, what I have suffered, how terribly I have been racked by alternate hope and fear, you would not have the heart—" Here my new weapon fell so heavily on her that she winced and paled under it, for my voice was choked with a sob, and the tears were rising.

She had thrown down her knitting instantly, and now knelt by my bedside in the completeness of her penitence; her bare, dimpled elbows on the counterpane, her sweet, remorseful face supported by a pair of shapely hands—hands more accustomed to cuff than to caress, but oh! so thrilling in their contact when they did!—her dark eyes meeting mine full of a sweet, motherly relenting, as if they would plead, "My teasing was all love upside-down," while her voice, when she spoke, was as soft as that of any cooing dove.

"You will break my heart if you look at me like that, monsieur; you must know that I would not really hurt you for the world. Have I been so very cruel to you? If it had been news of the fair lady, I wouldn't have kept it from you for an instant, for I can guess how eager you would have been for it—but a little old man, *kaum grösser als ich*, how could I imagine that your heart was so set on him?—one of a nation, too, who are the sworn enemies of your England."

I could not speak. So *he* had been saved, too, by a miracle!

"*Ruhig! ruhig!* monsieur. You have no need to be afraid. Did you think so badly of Thérèse as to believe she could tease you about so solemn and sad a thing as that you feared? He

is to come again this afternoon to see you, if the doctor finds you are none the worse for the intelligence. That was why I took so many precautions in telling you. And I would ask you to forgive me, only that I am still a little angry that you could think so badly of me."

She looked at me, smiling, but I could not smile yet. I was vehemently struggling with tears, and getting worsted by them. Remember, in my excuse, how weak I was.

"He has seen you once before, monsieur," continued Thérèse, still upon her knees. "I led him to the door between this and the *Schenkstube*, and let him look in upon you as you slept, and he cried—the little man—*lieber Gott!* as you are crying now."

Then she broke down herself, and we cried together as heartily and noisily as two children. And (how it happened, I do not know) my hot head was on her bosom, and our lips so close, so close, that at last they touched involuntarily, separating again with a sound which startled us into quietude.

The next moment she was gone, and I alone, to wonder what we had done, and what was the meaning of it, and why forbidden fruit is always the sweetest.

But when she came, half an hour afterwards, to administer the *Suppe* cooked by Fleurette, there was no sign of shame on her pale oval cheek, or of embarrassment in her laughing eye. She was the old Thérèse again; in a dozen moods at once; peremptory, supplicating; haughty, humble; sweet as honey and bitter as quinine; sharp and gentle in a breath; irresistible, in short, to any man whose heart was not preoccupied as mine was.

But the kiss was forgotten, or ignored completely. Mademoiselle was full of her function, and harnessed with its authority to the unflinching finger-tips. She approached my bed with a resolute air, and stationed herself beside it with the rigidity and determination of a sentinel on duty.

"Open your mouth, monsieur." The tone of her voice was pregnant with an authority which seemed to challenge opposition.

I accepted the challenge instantly, and threw down a ready gauntlet. Next to kissing Thérèse, nothing was pleasanter than quarrelling with her. At least, at the moment I thought so.

"What for, *mein Fräulein?*"

"Asks 'What for?' when I am standing with the spoon in

one hand and the steaming basin in the other! But men are as blind as moles, especially Englishmen."

"And chits, pretending to be women, are as perverse as young fillies till they are tamed by bit and bridle—especially cosmopolites, half Swiss, half English, and half French."

"Three halves in a whole—is that an English problem, monsieur? Even our village *Lehrer* taught me better than that. And, talking of bits and bridles, there is such a thing as a good Swiss *Ruthe*."

"Certainly, *mein Fräulein*. I hardly liked to suggest it; but if you are sensible that your iniquities rise to that alternative—"

"You asked me 'What for?' just now, monsieur, but I will tell you what *not* for. Not to talk certainly, and not to—" Here she stopped, blushing: a singularly infectious blush, for my cheek instantly reflected it, and our eyes fell simultaneously. Thérèse was the first to recover her lost self-possession. In some things women are a thousand times cleverer than men.

"Do you think the newly hatched nestlings ask 'What for?' when the parent birds bring the worm?" said Thérèse, in a tone of sharp reprimand. "Open your mouth this moment, or—"

In defiance of the threatening "*sonst*," I only opened it to speak again:

"But I am not hungry, and am not a newly hatched nestling, and if anybody offered me a worm—"

"No credit to you," interrupted Thérèse, suddenly putting down her basin, and shifting her spoon in a manner which made me remember with some alarm my old nurse, and the way in which she would sometimes, after long waiting, administer medicine; "you might have been, you know."

This logic being unanswerable, as woman's logic always is, I was dumb. Moreover, the power of speech was momentarily taken from me: my nurse's manner of coercion was not, I found, peculiar to any nation, but the common property of all; the spoon was in my mouth, and it was a case of swallowing or choking. So I submitted in somewhat shamefaced silence, and the *Suppe* being remarkably good, and my appetite only emotionally in abeyance and now coming fresh to the fore, I resented the *finale* almost as much as I had resented the brusque commencement.

"Is that all?" I inquired, as the spoon ceased to travel from

the basin to my mouth, and Thérèse's busy hands were arranging the pillows at my head.

"That is all, monsieur."

"But I have not had half enough."

"Can't help it, monsieur; you will not get any more."

"One might think I was a baby."

"One might really often think so," said Thérèse, with ready acquiescence.

I was too sleepy to be angry. So I looked up into the bright face of my *Mütterchen*, and she looked down on me, firm, though smiling.

"Little tyrant!" I murmured.

"Tyrant indeed!" And I saw the pretty head toss just as my eyes were closing. "But what could you expect from an *Engländer*? And now, monsieur, you are to go to sleep this minute."

I am not sure whether I only thought or spoke the next words, to the effect that nothing should induce me. I only know that I did go to sleep, perhaps because I knew that Thérèse was not to be disobeyed with impunity, and slept as sweetly and peacefully as if I had been in truth the baby Thérèse loved to make of me. And I dreamed I was a doll, and that the *Mädel* was my little mistress; that sometimes she beat and sometimes caressed me, always holding me though—so that chastisement and reward were as like as two peas, and hardly distinguishable—very close to her heart.

CHAPTER XV.

THÉRÈSE.

"Wouldst be loved by all the world,
Maiden, sweet as May in bloom,
Leave thy rosy lip uncurled,
Rest contented with thy doom.

"Know that, Envy hateth most
What is lovely, sweet, and fair;
Know it is thy virtues' host
That she cannot, cannot bear."

I SLEPT well after hearing the good news from Thérèse, and when the morning sun streamed in again through the diamond-

shaped panes, Moppert was allowed to come into my room. My eyes were too dim to see him for a moment, but when they cleared we clasped hands and gazed into each other's faces as friends might do, meeting in Eternity.

Then he sat down beside me, with a warning finger on his lip, and a look of such sincere affection in his eyes that my own filled again.

"Ah, dear friend," he said, "I have offered up a thousand prayers to Our Lady on your behalf, and that they have been answered seems to me a blessed omen for the future."

I noticed with pain that he was replacing his right arm in a sling from which he had removed it during our hand-shake.

"Nothing of consequence," he explained; "only a sprain, which is all but healed again."

"How did it happen?"

"*Mon ami*, I will tell you everything in time, but to-day I have been severely restricted as to the topic of our discourse, and it seems to me that mademoiselle is a little person who expects to be obeyed.

I laughed and nodded, very emphatically.

"Ah, monsieur, you have had a hard time of it, no doubt, with this little brunette? She has ruled you with a rod of iron?"

"Not with one, monsieur, but with ten."

"Pummelled you sore, eh?"

"Monsieur, I am one wound from head to foot."

"*La coquine!* And has she inflicted more than flesh-wounds, monsieur? Has she tried her hand upon your heart?"

"Monsieur, I cannot tell what she might have done; she is capable of *anything*, but I have no heart left to wound."

"Did you leave it behind you in the lake for the water nixies?"

"You know better than that, monsieur; you know where it is."

"The cold water has not quenched your ardor, then? You still think of the other?"

"Oh, monsieur, if you only knew how often and how much!"

"*Mon ami*, your cheek is flushing and your eye brightening. It is good. I am content to see it. But you must not let Mademoiselle Thérèse misunderstand you; her giddy head might get some absurd idea into it, which would grieve you, would it not?"

He looked keenly at me as he put the question. I answered, impetuously:

"Monsieur, it would grieve me so much that, if I feared anything of the sort, I would ask you to help me don my coat and pantaloons, and lend me a helping hand to run away."

"There is no danger, then?"

"I am very fond of Thérèse, monsieur, and I think she likes me, too, a little, though she is so hard with me."

"Humph!"

I went on recklessly, an irresistible impulse driving me to confess.

"We quarrel, but we make it up again, and yesterday we solemnized our reconciliation with a kiss."

"What! You have dared to embrace her!"

"Yes, monsieur. We are capital friends, Thérèse and I. I like her as well as if she were my sister. And she has a pretty mouth; don't you think so?"

"Man without a conscience; here is your coat, here are your pantaloons; put them on this minute."

"Monsieur, I would rather be excused. On the whole, I feel too weak to move yet. This bed is not of down, yet my limbs have ceased to ache, and now it seems easy. And if my pretty nurse teases me, why, I can pay her out in kisses."

"And be paid out by her father in coin less sweet, but much more wholesome. Well, I *had* hopes of you."

"Cherish them still, monsieur, for I have great hopes of myself. I have left my *ennui* behind me in the lake. There is work for me to do. The first work, with God's help, to save her."

"Which her?" inquired Moppert, a doubtful sparkle in his eye.

"Was there never a time, monsieur, when for you, as for me, the feminine pronoun meant only one person—meant all the world, in short?"

"Ah, the poor Thérèse!"

"Do you think I would have kissed her, or she me, if we had not both known—"

"If you had both known that a horsewhipping was in store for you, it would have been a wholesome reminder; and, as for me, I would not lift a finger to prevent it."

"Yes, you would, monsieur, for my pulse never throbbed a throb quicker when our lips met."

"But hers, hers, hers?"

"Here she comes to answer for herself."

The door was opening as I spoke, and Thérèse's laughing eyes met mine inquiringly.

"Thérèse, come and take my part. This friend of mine has been doing nothing but scold me."

"Been scolding you, has he? Well, I have no doubt you deserve it. But, if scolding won't do, we must try punishment. He has been getting excited, is it not so, monsieur? Therefore you will have the kindness to wish him good-bye."

"Excited? My blood is flowing as icily as your own, mademoiselle. When you hear what he has been saying, you will want to punish him instead of me."

Moppert made a horrified gesture at my temerity. But I thought I knew what I was doing.

"What do you think he's afraid of?" I said, laughing.

"Of your taking cold and of my being angry," she answered, peremptorily replacing my head upon the pillow from which I had raised it. "Who gave you leave to sit up, monsieur?"

"Leave? Can't I please myself?"

"Certainly not," answered Thérèse, laying one cool hand upon my brow, and feeling my pulse with the other.

It was delightful. I hardly like to say how delightful, it seems so inconsistent.

"Am I not my own master?" I continued, pretending to rebel in order to prolong the punishment.

She did not deign to answer; only ran her slender fingers through my hair, and stooped low to listen to my breathing. Her pretty mouth, temptingly rounded, almost touched mine.

Yet I felt sure, quite, quite sure, that her love for me was entirely motherly.

"Perhaps he was afraid of that," repeated Thérèse, "and with excellent reason, too, for you *are* feverish and I *am* angry."

"No, mademoiselle, it wasn't that at all," I went on, laughing; "he was afraid of your falling in love with me; but, now that he sees how you behave to me, I think his fears will vanish."

For a moment after I had made this foolish, foolish speech, there was a dead silence. Angry color flushed Thérèse's cheek a deep crimson, her restless hands half clenched themselves, and her dark eyes flashed. Then she turned and walked to the door between us and the *Schenkstube*, standing there a moment before turning back to us.

The color had faded from her cheek again, leaving it paler than usual, and her mouth, in the corners of which a smile always seemed to lurk, was sternly set—sternly and yet so sorrowfully that I wished I had bitten off my tongue before letting it wag so foolishly.

She seated herself on a chair by my bedside, first chastising me with a look which made me tingle from head to foot with shame, then turned her beautiful eyes, dark, clear, and unwontedly earnest, on Moppert, to whom she spoke. He had been looking at her with undisguised admiration, at me with undisguised reproof.

“Monsieur,” she began, somewhat irrelevantly, as I thought, “you have been now nearly a fortnight in Brunnen, and have, no doubt, often heard people speak of Thérèse, the *Schenkmädchen*?”

“Mademoiselle, I have heard you spoken of more than any one else in Brunnen.”

“Monsieur, your hair is gray—an old man surely would not deceive a girl who trusted in him—and your eyes are grave and clear and steady. I believe in eyes. I believe that I may trust you.”

“Mademoiselle, if my eyes are a true index to my heart, you may trust them implicitly, for that would scorn to deceive you.”

“Tell me, then, tell me truly, what you have heard about Thérèse.”

“Mademoiselle, I have heard much that is good. I have heard that you are very beautiful, and I see that it is true—the most beautiful girl in all the four cantons.”

Was she beautiful? I had hardly thought about it before. I only knew that she was pleasant. But now, looking at her with newly awakened eyes, I saw that it was true. Not only the most beautiful girl in the four cantons, but also, save one, the most beautiful woman in the world. Well for me that I had been in love before I saw her. For even to my chastened pride the thought of marrying a *Schenkmädchen* was preposterous.

Yet how gracefully, and now how haughtily, her small head sat upon her shapely neck! How smooth and dimpled were her shoulders! How white the full plumpness of her arms! How exquisitely curled the scarlet lips, scornful as those of any titled dame! Where, in the name of all the blue blood in the universe, did the ex-footman's daughter learn to look like that?

"Go on, monsieur. Do they say that I am sweet-tempered? Do they say—" Here she broke down with a smothered cry of angry and indignant pain.

"No, mademoiselle, but they say that your voice is sweeter than that of the far-famed Loreley, and that you lure men to destruction."

"What more?"

"Let me stop, mademoiselle. It is not true, I am sure."

"Monsieur, you have promised me."

"That then you change your note, and laugh at the hearts you have broken."

"They say that, do they? Go on."

"Mademoiselle, let me stop, I beseech you. Your bodice is rising and falling stormily; on your cheek one spot begins to glow like a coal of fire; your smooth forehead is contracting; your slipper restless."

"Monsieur, I am not going to fly into a passion. I can control myself, and I will."

"Mademoiselle, if you command me to proceed I have no choice but to obey. They say further— Mademoiselle, let it be enough; what does it matter?"

"I *will* hear it."

"Mademoiselle, you are cruel to me as well as to yourself. You do not know what you are asking."

"But I *will* hear it."

"They say that you are only nursing the Englishman to break his heart, too; that there is witchery in your charms, and that no man can withstand you. They say that you have no heart to love any one, and that he had better have been drowned in the lake than ever come near you. They have sent me to take him away."

The long-kept-back tears were coming at last. I saw them falling one by one. I saw the girl's struggle to keep back the sobs shaking her. And I had to remember that this was all my doing.

"So you have come to take him away," she said at last, with as much bitterness as she could infuse into the sweet tones of her voice.

"I won't be taken away, Thérèse—not if he brings every one in Brunnen to help him."

She smiled at me through her tears, even in the midst of her

agitation carefully putting back the hand I stretched out under the coverlet again.

"Oh, monsieur, monsieur," she cried, laughing, now almost her old bright self once more, "you come too late. The mischief is done already. He will not go, even though I bid him."

"I shall never get well without the tonic of your tyranny," I cried.

"You hear, monsieur. Is it not dreadful? Don't you wish he had been left at the bottom of the lake?"

"No, mademoiselle."

"Don't you wish he had never seen Thérèse?"

"No, mademoiselle; I esteem him fortunate, and myself too, for having had that pleasure."

"Ah, perhaps you are falling a victim yourself!"

"Yes, mademoiselle, I have been falling a victim ever since I saw you."

"You frighten me, monsieur. I did not know I was so dangerous, nor that I could break hearts so easily."

"Mademoiselle, necks have been broken in scaling your mountains, but that is not the fault of the glacier."

"Bah! Would you compare me to anything so icy as that. You think then, like my kind neighbors, that I have no heart at all."

"I think, mademoiselle, that a heart capable of profoundest affection beats beneath your *mieder*—a heart that loving once would love forever, but that as yet it is untouched."

As she put her hands upon his shoulders in the pretty way in which she was wont to plead with her father, I saw her face change its expression from that of a playful child to that of an impassioned woman. Her pale cheek glowed again, her lips parted, her voice was agitated, as if an unskilful hand had touched some exquisite instrument which could not yet yield full harmony.

"Will it ever be touched?" she said, her voice vibrating, while she looked up into the old man's face as if he had been a prophet; "will it ever be touched, monsieur?"

But before he could answer she was laughing again gayly, promising me no end of penalties for having been the cause of so much disquietude, and laughed still as she playfully pushed Moppert out of my room into the glowing sunshine of the midday.

CHAPTER XVI.

A SOLEMN VOW.

“O mon père,” lui dis-je, “je ne savais pas que la direction d’intention eût la force de rendre les promesses utiles.” “Vous voyez,” dit le père, “que voilà une grande facilité pour le commerce du monde.”

PASCAL (*Lettres Provinciales*).

My progress towards complete recovery was very rapid after my interview with Moppert. Soon I was allowed to sit up; soon even able to take a few steps out into the sweet autumn air; very soon able to coerce Thérèse, as I triumphantly asserted, instead of her coercing me.

But before this happy termination to our disaster had been attained, nearly a month had elapsed, during which our worst fears for the beautiful lady might have been realized. And though I could not deny even to myself that her image in my mind had become somewhat misty, I struggled against the conviction with fierce contempt for my instability. Was it not to her that I owed the rousing of soul and body out of a lethargy which was ruining me? I hated myself for my enforced inaction, and every minute of delay seemed an age.

In the meantime Moppert had not been idle. He had been to Lucerne before he saw me, and ascertained that the apartments occupied by Monsieur le Prince de Pöbeldowski and his suite had been taken until the end of October, and that therefore we still had some time before us.

His inquiries concerning the lady herself had not produced any definite information. The bribed waiter, probably already bribed by some one else, was quite non-committal. He did not know where Mademoiselle came from; she spoke several languages equally well. He did not know whether the princess was kind to her—the prince was, and the prince was master. He did not know whether she had any friends or not—never heard of any. He did not know whether she were happy—she

cried a good bit, which was a queer way of showing it; but then women were queer—could narrate a case in point from his own experience.

Furthermore, the waiter pulled up rather short at this point; did not know—very sulkily—anything more about her—had too much to do to busy himself with what others were doing. Besides, as a respectable young man engaged to a respectable young woman, she wasn't the sort of person he cared to talk about.

And this was all Moppert's five francs had elicited.

"I wish I had been there to knock him down," I cried, indignantly.

"But as you were not," said Moppert, rather dryly, "what is to be done next?"

My own feelings would have prompted me to say, raise the devil generally, but Moppert was still looking at me with his own dry, caustic smile, and I was silent.

"I'll tell you what, *mon ami*," he said, after a thoughtful tug at his moustache, "when I was quite nonplussed at Lucerne I used to go to Madame Papillote, and she always knew what to do. Women beat us out and out at intrigue. Let us take a woman into our confidence."

"What woman?"

"Who better than Mademoiselle Thérèse?"

I blushed a little. Was he thinking to kill two birds with one stone? But he was right; if any one could help us, it was she.

Thérèse listened as Moppert narrated, with grave attention, her eyes downcast, even her busy fingers perfectly motionless. I think he was somewhat reassured by her apathy, by her evident want of surprise.

"You did well," she said at last, slowly, yet very composedly—"you did well, monsieur, to come to Thérèse. People say that what I undertake I succeed in, and I am going to undertake to help you."

"Thérèse," I cried, enraptured, "was there ever such a charming girl as you are? How shall I thank you?"

I stretched out my hand to grasp hers, but she did not seem to see it. I tried to catch her eye, but she appeared to have only vision for Moppert.

"Thérèse, tell me what you want most in the world, and I will give it you, even if it cost me half what I possess."

With one of those sudden changes so characteristic of her, she now turned sharply towards me; her face, nay, even her white shoulders and pearly ears, dyed a deep crimson. Her girlish figure shook with the violent effort she made to regain her lost self-control. It seemed as if the effort would choke her.

"What is the matter, Thérèse? What have I done to vex you?"

She burst into a peal of laughter—laughter so discordant that it horrified me—and ran, still laughing, out of the room.

I looked at Moppert for an explanation; but he only said, sharply and laconically, as the door closed upon us:

"How soon will you be able to go?"

Adding, after a short interval, during which he fiercely tugged at his moustache:

"If ever you kiss that girl again I'll give up the enterprise."

Could he have imagined—?

And I made a vow—a solemn one—never to kiss Thérèse again on any provocation whatsoever, and kept it—of course.

CHAPTER XVII.

IN THE SCHENKSTUBE.

"And now, good day; I wish you pleasant dreams,
And greater faith in woman."

"Greater faith; I have the greatest faith;
For I believe Victorian is her lover."—LONGFELLOW.

IN a few moments after that last angry remark from Moppert, William entered the room, bringing with him a stout Brunnen lad, who greeted me with a grin from ear to ear, and a gruff "*Grüss Gott, Herre.*"

"*Grüss Gott,*" I answered, regarding with interest this burly son of the soil. His figure was almost gigantic, and even his loose and ill-made clothes could not quite disguise limbs shaped like those of a young Hercules. His coarse linen shirt, bleached

white as the snow upon his own mountains, hung loose over his chest, leaving his massive throat and hairy breast visible. His hands and feet were immense. He was a far finer specimen of the human animal than an average English peasant, and, so far as I have had an opportunity of judging, no exception, but a type of his class in German Switzerland.

But, ascending from the throat to the head, where that intangible something, human intelligence, is supposed to have its seat, one would have given, without hesitation, the palm to the average Anglo-Saxon. The pale goggle blue eyes of the giant, innocent and pacific looking, seemed but a degree removed from those of a peaceful grazing ox, whose knowledge of the world's laws goes no higher than that ploughing comes before grazing, labor before repose.

Yet once I saw those dull orbs, on a never-to-be-forgotten occasion, all ablaze in the light of a divine fire, lit by God.

Globularity was the prevailing impression which this gigantic Teuton made upon me. His face was round, his flat nose round, his mildly astonished eyes round. And as for his temper, as I found out afterwards, there wasn't an angle in it.

According to the law of contrariety which governs human actions, some one had bestowed the rather ferocious name of Nicholas upon this peaceful giant. He was known to his compatriots as Peter's Nick—Peter being his paternal ancestor. And, although so young, he had already a Nick of his own, who is doubtless now known by the cognomen of Old Nick's Nick.

"Well, sir, how do you find yourself this evening?" said William, kindly. "Me and Nick's been sent to carry you into the *Schenkstube*. There's goin' to be some fun to-night. And she bade us look sharp about it, did the *Mädel*, and if *we* don't *she* will. What did the *Mädel* say, Nick?"

"To bring him whether he would or no," answered Nick, nothing now but a stalwart figure capped by a mouth.

"And are we going to do it, Nick?"

"*Jo, jo, Herre.*"

If Thérèse had told Nick to throw me into the lake, he would have done it, I am sure.

The next moment I was in the air, easy-chair and all, raised there by the sinewy arms of Nicholas, and a moment later I was in the *Schenkstube*.

Moppert, laughing heartily, followed me and my bearer.

We were greeted by a simultaneous *Grüss Gott!* from about twenty to thirty men, from the bald-headed patriarch of the village to the lad, barely emancipated from the discipline of the maternal *Ruthe*.

There were three windows in the room—lattice-windows with diamond-shaped panes. One of these was open, and through it I looked down upon the shimmering lake, now dyed deep crimson by the glory of the sunset.

Opposite me rose the mountains, and I thought, as I gazed, that heaven itself could not be more divinely beautiful. No addition could improve the scene, and an item wanting would have been—at least to me—as disturbing as a feature failing on a lovely human face.

Feeling a trifle embarrassed by the universal gaze—for I was an object of great interest to the “lads”—I occupied myself for a while solely with the beauty of the landscape, brightened into special glory by the brilliancy of the setting sun, which was framing the tops of the mountains opposite with a deep border of living and transparent gold.

The two arms of the lake, one stretching towards Lucerne, the other towards Flüelen—the so-called Lake of Uri—lay as calm and unruffled before me as if they had never known what it was to be lashed by the Föhn. The water was of a vivid green, dark under the shadow of the mountains; and the air so clear that I could see the crevices on the glacier of Uri Rothstock, and even the point where ice melted into water. A few boats were crossing from the other side, wherein sat youths and maidens, the former wearing sprigs of edelweiss in their round hats, the latter gayly attired in the blue-and-scarlet *mieder* of the national costume.

As I gazed, the sun sank lower, embracing the mountains with ever-increasing ardor as the moment drew near when he must go. I saw the snow-tops crimson under his kisses until they glowed like peaks of living fire.

“Is it not glorious, monsieur?” said Thérèse, in a low voice, at my ear. “Don’t you think God must have a special love for Switzerland?”

I looked round with a sigh. Even her sweet voice broke the spell.

“Monsieur, though I have seen it so often, I always feel it just as new and wonderful. I could fancy I saw the gates of heaven opening, and that in another moment we should look straight in on God.”

The light was slowly fading now, and Thérèse stood quietly beside me until the mountains had recovered their usual proud purity—all the colder, it seemed, after their late outbreak of passion—and in the darkening sky stars began to twinkle. Then she closed the window; ordering me, with that quick change of feeling so characteristic of her, not to sit apart, sullen and morose, any longer, but to pay a little attention to my neighbors.

In obedience to my little dictatress, I commenced conversation with a stout *Junge* of fifty or thereabouts—who, I found, was regarding me with considerable curiosity—by remarking that it was a beautiful evening.

“If any one had told me,” he rejoined, much more to the point, “a fortnight ago, Herre, that I should ever drink a pot in your company, I’d have punched him for trying to make a fool of me—Michael Michaelis.”

“You thought I was lost?”

“Herre, when I saw you with these eyes—the eyes of Michael Michaelis—in your nut-shell of a boat upon the lake, and the Föhn signalled, if I’d thought about it at all—which I didn’t—I might have thought the lake would throw up your body to be buried decently in Brunnen churchyard, but not that I should ever drink a pot in your company.”

While we talked, I watched the men quaffing their beer, and watched Thérèse as she flitted hither and thither, waiting on them; her cheeks more warmly colored than usual; her eyes sometimes smiling approbation, sometimes flashing reproof; her abundant black hair braided into one long plait, falling far below her waist; her trimly fitting scarlet bodice showing to perfection the beauty of her figure; her short, full skirt allowing all admiring gazers to see the neat ankle and the pretty arched foot.

And as I gazed, filled with that restless discontent which attends the second stage of convalescence—when we begin to feel our weakness—I grew indignant and wrathful.

At the other end of the room, opposite the windows, was a

sort of bar, behind which stood Fleurette and Peter's Nick. It was there that Thérèse and William took the empty pots to be refilled, and this business was carried on so rapidly for a time that Thérèse's pretty feet hardly seemed to touch the floor as she ran from one to another.

"*Zwie Hamburger, Fleurette.*"

"*Ein Nürnberger Schnitt* for Michael Michaelis."

"*Thérèschen, Herze.* Have you got any double Bavarian?"

"Not for you, Peter Kunze."

"And why not for me, *Mädel*, if I've got the money to pay for it?"

Thérèse only looked at him. Every one else stopped drinking and looked too.

Peter shuffled uneasily upon his seat, muttered that he was *Herr* in his own house, and wasn't going to have the law laid down to him by other folks' *Mädel*. But Thérèse stood steady, and I saw Peter's Nick roll his shirt-sleeves a trifle higher and stand at attention.

"And there's more than one *Schenke* and more than one pretty girl in Brunnen," he added.

Thérèse never moved, but Peter's Nick gave his shirt-sleeves another roll, and drew a step nearer.

"*Schäme dich, Peter Kunze!*"

The words were scarcely audible, and yet it seemed as if the breath to utter them had gone forth from every mouth present. Peter dashed down his pot and went away in a rage.

"Why wouldn't she give it him?" I said.

"Double Bavarian costs double price," answered Michael Michaelis, laconically, "and Peter's got a sick wife."

"He will go elsewhere."

"*Ja wohl*, he will go elsewhere."

"And can the host afford to lose his customers like that?"

Michael looked at me with mild surprise in his mild eyes.

"He will come back to-morrow, Herre." It doesn't answer here in Brunnen to quarrel with Thérèse."

"Why not?"

"Ah, why not, Herre? It would take more than is in me to answer that. She isn't like any other *Mädel*, isn't Thérèse."

"I began to grow still more restless and discontented. It angered me to see those dimpled shoulders so close to the rough

coats of the lads, to notice how smilingly she heard the endearing epithets by which she was continually addressed. It infuriated me to see her exposed to the gaze of so many masculine eyes, and to feel that her grace and loveliness were made use of for a marketable purpose. Could any girl, specially could Thérèse, with that inflammable French blood coursing through her delicate veins, remain unsullied in such an atmosphere? But the worst was to come.

There were three tables in the room. Two were crowded by aborigines, one was occupied—sparsely now, for the season was drawing to its close—by strangers. There were two Italians, two Frenchmen, two or three Germans. All were talking rapidly; the Frenchmen in a low aside.

Riding rampant upon that gaunt hobby-horse of Old England—strict propriety—I angrily pushed back my chair, inwardly resolving to take the first opportunity to remonstrate with William as to the life his daughter was leading. Some vague notion of a respectable English boarding-school where I could pay a deep debt of gratitude, and cause a hedgeside rose to be trained into a fit standard for an English parterre, rose into my mind, when certain words falling on my ear sent me headlong from strict propriety into the slough of unmistakable Bohemianism.

“I have never before seen a girl half so beautiful!”

The speaker was one of the Frenchmen, a handsome young fellow of four or five and twenty, with a refined face, yet sensual eye; and that eye, beaming with no ray of purity, was fixed upon the swelling *mieder* of Thérèse.

“And what a figure, *sacrement*! Clémence would want to kill her.”

“*Taisez-vous, Brissot*; one is listening.”

“Bah! only an *Anglais*; that makes nothing.”

Whatever it “made,” I meant to hear the rest of the conversation if I could. With my eye negligently turned towards the table round which the aborigines, their thirst somewhat allayed, were beginning to talk noisily, I listened intently.

“Yesterday I wrote to Clémence that I was coming, but to-day I think I will disappoint her.”

“Ah, I have not known you since we were students together at the Lycée without finding out your weak point, Brissot.

Be satisfied with Clémence; she is beautiful enough, is she not?"

"I thought so yesterday, but to-day her image on my retina looks faded and insipid."

"Faithless gallant! but have a care! One told me that this girl is as virtuous as she is beautiful."

"They told me that of Clémence."

"That means you don't believe it."

"That means, *mon ami*, exactly what you please to interpret it."

"Brissot, I am not going to help you."

"*Mon cher*, I shall do very well without your assistance."

If there had been any blood in my body to boil, it would have boiled now, I am sure. Full of wrath, I watched Thérèse and the dark eye following her. Full of wrath, I vowed to do my utmost to take her away from such a life.

In the meantime the aborigines began to rise from their seats, and I concluded that the evening was over. But no; Peter's Nick and William, assisted by a few volunteers, were clearing the room for a dance. And the door opening, in came, blushing and giggling, a number of blooming daughters of the soil, evidently delighted at the noble display of partners awaiting them. The strangers rose too, smiling, quite willing to join in the amusement.

Some one — I think it was Peter's Nick — lifted me into a corner, where I could look on, the only spectator.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A BLOW FOR A KISS.

"Saw a boy a rosebud sweet,
Rosebud in the thicket,
And a green stem was its seat;
Quick he ran with eager feet,
All in haste to pick it.
Rosebud, rosebud, rosebud red,
Rosebud in the thicket.

"Broke the stem whereon it grew,
Pulled it from the thicket;
Rosebud said, The deed shalt rue,
I've a thorn that's keen and true,
Through thy hand I'll prick it.
Rosebud, rosebud, rosebud red,
Rosebud in the thicket."

Translated from GOETHE (Lieder).

"MONSIEUR did not know it was my *Namenstag*." It was Thérèse's sweet voice which just murmured these words at my ear.

"No, I did not know it."

"Monsieur looks grave and tired. If I did not just now feel too good-humored to say anything unkind, I would say, cross. But perhaps monsieur is thinking of the beautiful lady?"

"No, Thérèse, I was thinking of you."

"Oh, I don't feel honored. For monsieur's brow is clouded, his eye angry, his lip morose. And not a word of congratulation for my *Namenstag*!"

"You expect me to congratulate you for having grown—how old is it?—among these men. Just now I feel inclined to *warn* you—to tell you—"

"Warn me—tell me—what do you mean, monsieur? If I had not nerves of iron I might be frightened to death. But out with your warnings; they won't improve with keeping, any more than beer does when the bottle is opened."

"Well, are you going to dance?"

"To dance, I? Ask the sun if it is going to shine, or the water to ripple, or the bird to sing. Really, monsieur, you are preposterous. You'd better go back to bed again."

"I can't prevent you, of course. I have no authority over you. If I had," I added, savagely, "I would not let a single man here put his arm round your waist, I would not let a soul in the room call you by those caressing names. But—you seem to like it."

"Monsieur, you are detestable, you are odious, you are wicked. As if the poor lads meant any harm! It is you who are full of bad thoughts, or you would not imagine evil where there is none."

We were both now in a fury. Thérèse's pale cheek was crimson, her eyes full of indignant tears, her lip bleeding from the cruel curb of the pitiless white teeth.

"If you were able to dance, monsieur—which you are not, Englishmen can do nothing—I would not dance with you. I detest you, monsieur. You have hurt me more than I can bear with your vile innuendoes. I will never forgive you, and never speak to you again."

"All that, mademoiselle, which only proves what a temper you have—a temper requiring the severest discipline—will not prevent my doing my utmost to prevail with your father to put a stop to this. You have saved my life. I am not going to forget what I owe you."

"I throw your gratitude back in your teeth, monsieur," cried Thérèse, her tears dried up in the fire of her wrath, and forgetting with true woman's inconsistency her vow of never speaking to me again. "You shall not make a strait-laced English miss of me. I'll die first. Let me go, monsieur. How dare you touch me? Are you any better than another?"

We had quite forgotten caution, both of us, but fortunately our raised voices were drowned in the noise of the arrangements for the dance, and in the welcome given to the new-comers. Now the ladies were being regaled with some hot beverage, which diffused a fragrant odor, and the young men were selecting their partners. There was a universal call for Thérèse. I saw the Frenchman advancing, and I spoke hurriedly:

"Hate me as much as you will, Thérèse, but don't dance with that man."

"What man, monsieur?"

"That Frenchman coming towards you."

"That handsome man! And why not, pray?"

"Because I have the strongest reason for wishing that you should not."

Her red lip curled scornfully as she answered:

"And that is just why I shall do it. Besides, he is a Frenchman. Frenchmen know how to dance; *they* are not stupid."

"I will call your father."

"He has been sent for to the village, monsieur; I saw him leave the room a moment ago. And I shall do as I like."

The young Frenchman advanced with a low bow, soliciting the honor of her hand for the dance. And with a mocking courtesy to me, she put her hand upon his arm, and was led to her place among the dancers.

The music struck up. Two or three fiddlers had found accommodation behind the bar for that purpose. Even Fleurette was being escorted by Peter's Nick to the bottom of the row, and one or two of the men who had not been fortunate enough to secure lady partners jocosely led out substitutes of their own sex. In a few seconds the room was in a whirl; quicker and quicker moved the dancers, until girlish cheeks glowed in emulation of the scarlet bodices, and bodices themselves rose and fell more rapidly to the time of the quickened heart-beat. Moppert, too, had caught the infection, and was whirling a very stout *Dirne*, whose waist the little man could only half encircle, round with the others.

I will not enter into further details of the dance. I only watched Thérèse, transferred from one pair of masculine arms to another. My anger waning, left me sick and faint. I was just making a sign to Peter's Nick to take me back into my room when a catastrophe occurred.

I know now from her own innocent confession that Thérèse's fury at my reproof arose in great measure from her own inward conviction that I was not wholly wrong. The terms of endearment, suitable enough for her childhood, were beginning to arouse in her womanhood a frequent feeling of shame. My cruel probing instrument had sounded the new wound to the bullet rankling there, and the first rebound at the smart carried her beyond consideration for anything but the intolerable pain.

Of course the Frenchman knew nothing of all this. Her ready

and apparently delighted consent to dance with him; her smiling reception of his, at first cautious, and ever bolder and broader, compliments carried him beyond the bounds of prudence. How could he know that her smiles were all subterfuge, her ear deaf to his voice? As, in the whirl of the dance, her sweet flushed face came into close proximity to his, he pressed his lips to it with a sharp sound, distinctly heard above the moving feet and the strains of the music.

My indignation took away what little strength I had and forced me to keep my invalid chair, the most helpless creature in the room. I saw the smile, trembling on the lips of the maidens, reflected rather ominously in the eyes of their partners. Then every one stood still, as if the significant sound had broken the spring which set them in motion.

For they knew the maiden better than he did—better than I.

Thérèse had torn herself away from the arms of her partner, and now stood facing him, her cheek as pale as the white-washed wall of the *Schenkstube*. As for him, he stood feigning the smile of indifference, though he knew now that he had made a terrible mistake. His friend stood anxiously in the background, looking on eagerly.

“*Er wird Fiegen kriegen, aber keine süssen,*” said some one standing near me.

The pallor on Thérèse’s cheek was giving place to a burning blush, an angry light flashed out of her dimmed eye, and even her dimpled shoulders were so deeply dyed that the *mieder* seemed to pale beside them. Then the fury rushed into her hand—that restless hand so quick to respond to any summons from the brain.

The next moment another sharp sound resounded through the room. There was an involuntary “Oh!” from the Frenchman, and a laugh of approval from every other mouth present.

With one hand on his swelling cheek, the mortified Frenchman made good his retreat. I looked round for Thérèse, but she was gone.

There was no more dancing that evening. Peter’s Nick and Fleurette tried to break up the whispering groups, who only separated to depart.

Then Peter’s Nick carried me to bed, and I saw Thérèse that evening no more.

CHAPTER XIX.

UNSOLVED PROBLEMS.

"I cannot tell the reason why
I like her kisses so,
Yet never beg one; she'd reply,
I sadly fear, with 'No.'
My lips meet hers as doth the bee
Sweet honey sip, instinctively.

"Just as the zephyr woos the rose,
I woo; no 'Lovest me?'
Falls from my lips, yet her cheek glows
A full response and free.
Ah me! I never saw the dart,
Till, subtly aimed, it pierced my heart."

Adapted from UHLAND.

It is undoubtedly true that a good, downright, hearty quarrel is often more efficacious in cementing friendship into an indissoluble bond than long years of pacific passivity, that the tenderest friendships of our lives are watered by abundant tears, and that true love never does run smooth.

Nevertheless, if quarrelling is essential, it is also very bitter. The storm passes over bowed heads, and the period after the fury of the tempest until the return of the sunshine is one of profound depression.

I passed a very restless night after my first serious quarrel with Thérèse, seeing her ever anew in my dreams with angry, averted face, and hearing anew the ominous sound and the dubious laughs succeeding it.

At last the morning dawned, and the sun streamed in through my window, but it brought no sunshine into my soul. The higher it rose, the lower sank my spirits. For the more I sought to analyze my own motives for my attack on Thérèse, the more despicable they appeared. I had armed myself with the sword of jealousy and the shield of uncharitableness to

do battle with the sunbeam for shining alike on all. If Thérèse would but come, that I might show her how ready I was to forgive.

But she did not come. How could I expect her to come? There are insults too gross to be forgiven. I had been measuring her by the petty conventional standard, beside which she rose as lofty and spotless as her own Alps. I had cast dirt on the hedgeside rose for rejoicing other eyes as well as my own, though I knew well, even when my anger, the baleful blaze of jealousy, was at its hottest, that no fair English girl, however guarded, was surrounded by thorns more keen and sharp for the punishment of those who would touch as well as admire than this sweetest *Heideröschchen*.

So the refrain of my elegy resolved itself into: Oh, if Thérèse would but come, that I might implore her to forgive me!

Nevertheless she came not.

Only Fleurette came to give me my medicine and the coffee, which this morning tasted bitter as gall; only William, graver than usual, but stubbornly silent as to the cause of his gravity; only Moppert, hovering round my easy-chair like a parent bird round a threatened nestling; only evening darkening into night, with a restless wind sobbing outside my window, like a lost spirit seeking rest and finding none.

Strive to retain Hope when she would fly from you; compel the fickle goddess to yield to your desire; try abduction, if prayers are unavailing; clasp her to your bosom until her struggles cease and she remains motionless—the corpse of a dead Hope, more terrible than aught else on earth! Rather turn your face to the wall and read there the dread message of Despair, which has at least the merit of consistency: “Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin.”

Again and again I closed my eyes and tried to forget the hungry, gnawing pain which supplemented the first sharp agony, striving to accept the grisly, philosophic belief that pain exists only in the imagination. I had no power to wrestle with it. It baffled every effort, and, like an insolent conqueror, put its cruel foot upon my neck.

“Monsieur!”

Just a whisper, the faintest whisper possible, yet shaking every

nerve within me like a clap of thunder. I thrust away my dead Hope and hushed my heart's beat to listen.

"Monsieur!"

It *was* Thérèse's voice, and it was soft and supplicating, and ended in a sob. I opened my eyes, and there she stood in real flesh and blood beside me! The lamp cast its full light upon her, and I could see how sad she was, her eyes reddened with much weeping, her sweet, pale face down-turned; profound dejection in the hang of her heavy head; profound submission in her attitude, which, as I gazed, sank to the lowest depth of humiliation. With a fresh burst of tears she flung herself passionately on her knees by my bedside and hid her streaming eyes in the coverlet.

A moment before I had cast away my dead Hope, and now behold her again, all the lovelier after her resurrection! no longer a pampered mistress, but a trembling wife, caressing the hand which had murdered her. A moment before I had cried "*Pecavi*" with the loudest, now I was most unexpectedly raised from the lowly position of a suppliant into the lofty one of a magnanimous absolver.

With a rapid reversion of my mental attitude, I turned a cold shoulder towards lovely Hope—for was she not eclipsed altogether by plump and well-favored Certainty?—and I let Thérèse sob on; so sorry that my heart ached, and yet so glad that I could have burst out into a peal of triumph.

But it was not in the girl's nature to do anything for long. After a while she raised her head and fixed her dark eyes, still brimful of tears, upon my face. As she opened hers I closed mine and feigned to sleep.

"Monsieur is not sleeping, I know. I saw his eyes wide open just now."

No answer

"Monsieur, shall I give you your medicine?"

Still silence.

"Monsieur—" in an agitated and alarmed voice—"will you not speak to me?"

"Certainly, Thérèse, *I* never made a vow not to speak to you again."

"Monsieur, why do you speak so coldly and cruelly? *I cannot* bear it. Why do you offer me a stone when I ask for bread?"

"Thérèse, yesterday I implored you to take the bread I offered, and you cast it from you and trampled it under your feet."

"And was I not punished for it, monsieur? Were you not a witness to my disgrace? Did I not break my teeth upon the stone I picked up for myself?"

"I certainly hope it proved unpalatable to you."

"Unpalatable! It sickened me, monsieur. It poisoned me. Yesterday I was honored even by my enemies; to-day I am a byword in Brunnen. And if you hate me too—" Here she broke down into a sob again. (Good heavens! is it from God or the devil that we get the power to hurt those most whom we love most tenderly?)

"I do not hate you, Thérèse. I am only sorry for you; specially sorry that you cannot distinguish friends from enemies."

"And being sorry for me in that tone, monsieur, is worse than hating me. It shows that you, too, despise me, as I despise myself."

I lay quiet, and Thérèse, after a few despairing sobs, grew quiet, too. So quiet, that at last, terrified at the idea that she had gone away, I opened my eyes again.

But there was no fear of that. She had risen from her knees, but was still standing beside me, her pale cheek wet with despairing tears, her full lips quivering, her pretty little *retroussé* nose reddened from suppressed emotion. My heart began to relent and to swell up into my throat as I looked upon her, and the whip she had given me all but fell from my hand.

"Monsieur," she said again, and her voice was very humble and beseeching, "do let me give you your medicine. I'm sure you have not taken it."

"And I am sure, Thérèse, that I have."

"Two full tablespoonfuls three times a day without me there to make you?"

"Yes, Thérèse, even without the stimulus of your presence, I have taken them."

"But your *Suppe*? I know you have eaten nothing all day. I saw Fleurette bring it out untouched, and if I had not been so—so—"

"So perverse and naughty, Thérèse?" I said, suggestively, and with difficulty suppressing the laugh—a remorseful laugh though—that was rising.

"No, monsieur," she said, coloring angrily, "I was not going to say that; I was going to say, 'sorry and ashamed,' but now that it pleases you to mock, as well as despise me, I will not give you the satisfaction of knowing how very, very mis—I mean, how little I care for your anger or approbation, and if it had not been for my duty as your nurse—"

"Ho, ho! mademoiselle," I thought, "you have not had enough, have you? Very well, I know your raw spot now, thank Heaven!"

After those last angry observations from Thérèse, another long pause succeeded, so long that as the slow seconds ticked themselves away it seemed never ending. Finally, however, it was broken by another timid inquiry.

"Shall I raise the pillow at your head, monsieur, before I go, and tuck you in?"

"Thank you, I am quite comfortable."

"Good-night, monsieur."

"Good-night, Thérèse."

This time she made an angry movement towards the door, and my heart stood still with terror. My lips were opening to call her back, in another minute she would have been my absolute mistress; when, for the second time, with marvellous short-sightedness, she put the dropped reins into my hands.

Turning back, before her fingers had even touched the door-latch, she sank upon her knees again, and, clasping her hands imploringly, said, with a fresh burst of tears: "Monsieur, *cannot* you forgive me?"

"Certainly, Thérèse, when I am asked."

"But I *do* ask you, monsieur, I *do*. You force me to drink the cup of humiliation to the dregs, but even it is sweet compared with the nauseous draught I mixed for myself yesterday. Monsieur, say—I ask it on my knees, as I should ask it of the holy Mother of God—say: 'Thérèse, I am not angry with you any more. I forgive you from the bottom of my heart.'"

"Thérèse, I forgive you."

"'From the bottom of my heart,' monsieur."

"From the bottom of my heart; and more, I ask you just as earnestly, just as humbly, to forgive me."

"You, monsieur?" looking up delighted.

"Yes, I, Thérèse. It was right of me to warn you, but it was infamous, inexcusable, atrocious, to do it as I did."

"Go on, monsieur. Now that you are drinking with me I find humiliation the sweetest draught imaginable."

"If you were miserable all day and all night, I was ten times more miserable. If you had not come to me, I must have come to you."

"What a pity I did not wait, monsieur, though, after all, I think I would rather be at your feet than have you at mine."

"That is because you are the sweetest, most generous girl in the world."

"Take care, monsieur. Do not undo what you have done. I feel really *good* to-night and couldn't say a cross word to Fleurette or Peter's Nick, whatever happened. I have been as crusty as a bear to them all day, but I must make it up somehow. As to my father, poor dear! he has had a hard time of it, but to-morrow he will not know what has come to Thérèse, so velvety will be the slipper with which I shall rule him. Don't spoil what has made you a benefactor to the household, monsieur, for it is spoiling which has developed in me 'a temper requiring the severest discipline.'"

"Which is quite true, mademoiselle; yet you would not be Thérèse without it. Unsalted meat is tasteless, but there is such a thing as an overdose."

"Ah, I understand monsieur very well. I may be as disagreeable as I please to other people, only not to monsieur. I may scold Fleurette and Peter's Nick till I am hoarse, and monsieur rather relishes it than otherwise; I have seen him smiling at such times with anything but acrimony. I may scratch other people's eyes out, only I must be sure to sheath my claws in velvet when I touch monsieur. I am not blind to monsieur's faults, *Gott bewahre!* I have my own scales, wherein I weigh him, and the faults are heavy enough, goodness knows, yet—"

"Yet what, Thérèse?" For she stopped suddenly, blushing crimson to her finger-tips; even her eyes seemed to glow as eyes do when inward emotion is at its strongest.

"Yet I will not run the risk of quarrelling with you again to-night," she continued, slowly, almost dreamily, as if her thoughts had fled from her words. "To-night, monsieur; at least to-night, we will part friends."

But all the animation had died out of her face, and over the dear, tender, womanly eyes, which were fast filling again, fell a dense shadow. I saw her slight frame seized with a sudden shiver, I saw her cheek paling until it was almost of the ghastly hue of death.

"Good-night, monsieur," she said, solemnly. "*Leben Sie wohl.*"

"Say 'Adieu,' Thérèse. I don't like '*Leben Sie wohl*;' it sounds—well, it sounds too much like a final parting, and we shall meet again to-morrow."

"We shall meet again to-morrow," she repeated, yet her sweet voice was toneless and constrained. "I will say 'Adieu' if you like it better, monsieur; and what *can* be better than to commend you to God?"

"Let us shake hands, Thérèse."

"Is that shaking hands, monsieur?" for I had imperatively drawn her sweet face very close to mine, in spite of her resistance. "Fie, monsieur, how do you dare to kiss, when you find it so wrong of others even to touch me?"

"Because we have quarrelled and are making it up, Thérèse. Now it is your turn."

In the midst of the almost fierce negation to my request which was agitating her lips she suddenly changed her mind, wrenched herself free from my clinging hands, and, unconstrained, stooped low over me, leaving a warm kiss, and its twin sister, a warm tear, upon my cheek. Then she was gone, her parting legacy the indelible impression of her soft lips upon my face, and in my brain many conflicting thoughts and wishes which *would* not assimilate.

Among others, whether the exquisite pleasure which her kiss had given me was not an emotion totally inconsistent with my love for the unknown goddess.

Whether I could ever say again with a shadow of truth that my heart, beating violently under my hand, had not been agitated by this second embrace.

Whether I should be able to look Moppert in the face again.

Whether it would not be desirable to begin my crusade to the rescue as speedily as possible, or—abandon it.

Whether any man before me had ever been in love with two women at the same time, or whether I was a horrible *lusus naturæ* among my species.

Whether, finally, I should sleep for the night, and, if so, whether my dreams would be haunted by the imploring face of La Blonde or the tear-stained one of La Brune.

Whether, post—finally, I wasn't a fickle monster who deserved neither.

CHAPTER XX.

PROSIT !

“I laugh at every highly learned ox,
Who puffs himself as model for my mind ;
I laugh at all the cowards, fools and blind,
Who threaten me with weapons orthodox.
For when the seven blessings that were given
Are crushed between Fate's cruel hands, and after
Thrown down in cold contempt before our feet ;
And when within us even our heart's beat
Is hushed—our soul's with pain and anguish riven,—
What have we left but wild and cynic laughter ?”

HEINE.

It was with no discomposure that I heard, when I awoke the next morning after a night of sound and refreshing sleep, the rain-drops pattering thick and heavy against my window-panes. For within my heart all was serenity and sunshine ; the remembrance of the pain I had suffered only served to enhance the profound sense of ease and peace which now possessed me ; the storm which had threatened to wreck my friendship with Thérèse was but an animating reminiscence, now that that friendship was anchored upon a rock.

So, as a hand was laid upon the door-latch after the preliminary rap and the customary ‘*Herein*,’ I turned my face away, smiling in anticipation of the pleasure awaiting me, yet wilfully postponing it ; partly to gratify the feeling which, oddly enough, often prompts us to show most indifference where we feel least, partly to make her—the darling !—as eager as I was.

But there was no half-imperative, half-beseeching “*Monsieur*,” though my ears were wide open to be charmed by it. And the heavy footfall approaching my bed was surely not that of Thérèse. However wickedly inclined to tease me the maiden

might be, she could never have imitated Fleurette to *that* perfection. But, hoping against hope, I would not look up yet.

"Herre!" It *was* Fleurette (oh! cruel, cruel Thérèse!).

"Herre, will you have your coffee? It is late."

Never had Fleurette's stolid, unimpressionable, sallow, large-featured and high cheek-boned face appeared to me so odious before. First wishing her and the coffee—well, never mind where, I inquired, impatiently:

"Where is the Fräulein?"

"Eh? I am a little deaf in one ear."

I shouted my question anew into the hand with which she made a trumpet for the other.

"*Das Fräulein?* Ah! der Herr may well ask where *she* is. But the master may thank himself for it. He wouldn't heed what I told him when she was little, and now she's got the upper hand, got the power without the sense. I knew how it would be, years ago, and more's the pity that he didn't heed me."

"Where is she?"

"Gone down to Brunnen, sir, in the pouring rain, to see an old woman there who is ill. That's what she told the master. But if *he* chooses to believe it, *I* don't. Why, Madame Sauerwein was just as ill yesterday, and there was no talk of going to see her then, though the sun shone. It's the rheumatism, which doesn't come nor go in an hour. When a maiden like Thérèse is as crazy as that to have her own way, anybody with sense in their heads may know that there's another reason besides the one she gives. *Irgend ein Mannsperson, wahrscheinlich.* But it's none of my business."

I thought she seemed to make it very much her business, though. I had never heard her speak with so much animation before; her sallow cheek grew warmer in coloring, and her dull, fishy blue eyes brightened to the utmost of their capabilities.

"Shall I bring you your breakfast, Herre?" she inquired, again.

I intimated that she might do so, and during her short absence tried to sweeten my bitter disappointment by repeating to myself that Brunnen was close at hand, and that Thérèse would speedily return. I was beginning to find life not only dull, but also insupportable without the maiden; to feel her presence as indispensable to my well-being as a due amount of oxygen in the atmosphere. I could not breathe quite freely in

her absence; I was but half alive without her. Only when she was near, smiled or frowned at me, I became my whole self, because she had breathed into me a new breath of life, making me for the first time all that I could be. Yet, though I was supremely conscious of this, I still imagined that my heart was another's.

When I had finished the breakfast which Fleurette brought, I summoned her to come and sit beside me. As Thérèse was not there to be talked to, I would at least talk about her.

The woman came, the inevitable stocking in her hand.

"I suppose you have known Thérèse," I began, "ever since she was a baby?"

"Yes, Herre. I came to take care of the house and the *Kindli* when the *Frau* died."

"You knew her mother, too, then?"

"As much as ever I wanted to. She was a giddy thing whom folk thought well off to have caught an honest man. There was talk enough about her at one time. And her daughter is as like her as one poppy's like another in the corn."

The stocking progressed rapidly after this little outbreak of spite, whirling round and round in the hands that held it, like a thing in agony. The expressionless face was capable of one expression when roused. Something deep hidden in the heart had risen to the surface and was looking at me out of the eyes of the speaker. "Go on, Fleurette," I murmured. "Save me, if you can."

"But what's the use of talking to the men," she continued; "put a mountain of common-sense on one side and a pretty face on the other, and which among them turns to the mountain? Though it's none of my business."

"You were never married, I suppose?" I inquired rather maliciously, attributing this last remark to an injured sense of non-appreciation.

"Yes, I was, Herre, and left a widow with three hungry mouths to fill as well as my own. I was but nineteen years old when the Joachim came a-courting me, putting it into my silly head that I should be better off with *him* for a master than the one I'd got."

"You were not happy in your married life?"

"Happy, Herre? Who is happy? 'Tis but a change of mas-

ters for us women, and the master who pays wage is sure to treat us better than the master who doesn't. The men are all alike. Not that it makes any difference to me."

The rain poured heavily, in a steady, depressing, hopeless kind of way. There was not a single break in the leaden covering of the sky, nor a gleam of brightness anywhere. What did William mean by letting his daughter go out in such weather? What did Thérèse mean by staying away so long? I would reproach her with severity when she returned. I would hide my delight under a show of anger. Would she be submissive or rebellious—shamefaced or indignant? No matter how, if she only came.

For, oh me! longing was passing into pain, and appetite becoming hunger.

"Will she be back soon?" I said, unable further to curb my impatience.

"Soon? Nay, I cannot tell. That'll be as the whim takes her. She never does what you expect her to do. The master has himself to thank for it. Maybe she'll never come back."

"Woman, what do you mean?"

"You'll do yourself an injury, Herre, if you put yourself out of the way like that. But the men are all alike, every *Hanswurst* among them."

"What do you mean, I say?"

"Mean? Why, that Peter's Nick, who is as big a fool as ever drew the breath of life, is glowering out on the rain just like you, with a face sour enough to turn the milk. 'If you want to be pitched into,' I said, 'I can do that as well as the *Mädel*. Flesh and blood wouldn't stand the way she treats you,' I said, 'let alone bones and sinew. But that's the way of the men, they'd rather have a slap in the face from her than a kiss from another.'"

I threw open the casement and let the rain fall upon my heated head. The wind, rushing in cold and wet, seemed to freeze me to my marrow. I shivered and trembled, as it drearily repeated the words of Fleurette: "Maybe she'll never come back."

"You'll catch your death, Herre," said Fleurette, advancing to shut the window. "Ugh! how the wind whistles! You'd think 'twas speaking to you, many a time."

"What was that?" I cried, for the door creaked loudly, and the latch trembled as if a spectral hand were laid upon it.

"It's the rain-wind," answered Fleurette, reseating herself; "it was like this the first night I took the *Kindli* to my breast along with my own Lise, who is just of her age. And the *Frau*, her mother, was lying laid out in the next room, covered with flowers, and quiet enough then. I had the laying of her out myself, and a beautiful corpse she did make, to be sure. The *Mädel* would make a beautiful corpse, too; I've often thought so."

As she spoke, the tortured wind broke out into a prolonged and ominous wail, while the old, worm-eaten *Schenke* trembled to its base. The excitement of deferred hope, and the woman's heartless talk, and the tempest together, sent the blood whirling into my temples until they almost burst. I began to pace the room like a furious caged animal.

"They were brought up together," continued Fleurette, folding up her stocking—"Thérèse and my own *Mädel*—and brought up just the same except that the one got a sight of beating and the other got none. And my Lise's a good, honest, hard-working girl now, earning her eighty francs a year in Lucerne, though the lads won't have aught to do with her, because of a squint she was born with and a lame leg that no beating would cure. As for the other, if you want to look for her, Herre, go to the *Mannsleut'*—they'll be the ones that can tell you. When she was but a baby she was always in the *Schenkstube* with the lads, and they making as much of her as if she were a countess. But it's none of my business, even if it were any good talking to the men! Better keep one's breath for one's porridge."

She stumped heavily away, shaking every article in the room during her progress to the door, and leaving me again to my own reflections or to guesses as to what the wind was saying.

It was saying something now to which I was forced to listen, though I would fain have turned a deaf ear to it—something about cruel ingratitude to a benefactor—something about a father wronged and a daughter betrayed—something about a kiss heavily purchased.

A kiss! her kiss! With another wild rush of the wind Comprehension came and looked down upon me, forcing me to un-

derstand. I knew now what the wind was saying, and why Thérèse was gone. I knew now what her kiss signified.

Her kiss! Again it burned on my cheek, and now like a criminal brand which could never be effaced—a brand that would stand forever between me and married happiness.

Marriage? How dared I contemplate marriage, when all sophistical argument was hushed within me forever; when I was looking upon unveiled Truth and the whip of scorpions she held for my chastisement, and shuddering with dread and unutterable terror at the punishment I was called upon to endure? For to witness the pain of those to whom we owe much, and whom we have injured, is the most awful punishment God can lay upon us. And oh, how terrible is his wrath! Who may stand when he is angry?

For I knew now that, with every fibre of my heart I loved this village maiden—loved her in despite of unknown goddesses, and fidelity, and common-sense, and all the rest of it. I knew, too—and the knowledge was a sharp sword dividing the joints and marrow—that she loved me. Oh joy, unutterably divine! pain unendurable! for my dastardly, base-born pride was still stronger than my love, and, in the fierce conflict which would ensue between them, one—the weaker one—must perish.

I knew now that my love for the beautiful unknown had been but a phantom of my own creation; but *this* was a flesh-and-blood love, with a beating heart and throbbing pulse, which would bleed if I murdered it. Yet there was no alternative. I must murder it.

And now it came and stood beside me, looking into my eyes with its reproachful ones, and I knew that those tender orbs would haunt me forever. Love stood alone, unarmed, defenceless, but Pride had an army in its rear. See them rallying behind it: my father, my mother, Lord George Graceless and Sir Harry Goitt, the world, and the world's wife. Hear them applauding Pride's vehemently hissed "Impossible! Though thou art fit to die for love of her, thou canst never make Thérèse thy wife."

"I might have consented," so my father seemed to say, "to a union with the beautiful and accomplished lady, the companion of a princess, but to this—never. The girl is a *Schenkmädchen*, the *Herzchen* and *Liebchen* of village lads. Worse even

than this, she is the daughter of a footman and a lady's-maid. She belongs to the lowest of the people. A gentleman may ruin any number of the class he likes, but to marry one of them is a crime against society so atrocious that it must be punished, for the protection of society, by social death. Good gracious! if we allowed any such intrusion into our phalanxed ranks, what would become of *us*? For we cannot but see that in beauty, talent, virtue, these outsiders often—oh, very often!—carry off the palm.”

To these remarks every one but Love clapped approval. Love stood silent, looking at me.

Fierce and long was the conflict, for, as Moppert said, “Love is very powerful,” but at last it ceased. They locked my heart up in a dark dungeon, where it would never more be gladdened by the sunshine, and Love lay prostrate and motionless at my feet. I turned my head away, for I feared its heart-breaking eyes. It was dead; but even in death was stronger than any living thing.

And this, I thought, smiling bitterly, is the happiness which society gives, in exchange for what she has robbed me of! It is a curious-looking creature, and contact with it chills me to the marrow of my bones. But Mrs. Grundy has weighed it in the balance and declared it not wanting. Prosit to it, therefore. I drink your health, fair (no, not fair—foul—what are words?)—foul creature. Long life to you!

What are words? Evidently nothing. Evidently the devil's own invention to mislead us. I am moved to laugh over fools that believe in them. You tell me this is happiness, and I know it is profoundest misery, yet I say “Amen” to your words. Prosit to it, therefore; prosit, prosit!

I have been sitting for a long time, motionless and numbed, pondering, half dead and half alive, over the enigma of life. I have resolved that death is its only solution. I am becoming feverishly anxious for that solution. I wonder whether society would approve of the haven towards which I am steering.

Oh, how my aching head burns, and how high my pulse beats against the finger pressing it; but hurrah, hurrah! society approves of me! How cold and benumbed is my imprisoned heart, but Mrs. Grundy wishes it long life in its dungeon! How profound is the death of all that made life valuable, but

they were offered up to a great Juggernaut! How I laughed, to be sure, with the German student's gay words of greeting upon my lips. Prosit to you, dearly beloved friends, who have demanded from me more than my heart's blood, and have got it! Prosit, prosit, prosit!

Then I went to bed and slept, and in the dead of night "a spirit passed before my face, and the hair of my flesh stood up."

Oh, my murdered love! Society cannot exorcise thy spirit, or command thee not to haunt me. Even in my sleep I heard thee turn in thy coffin, and "an image was before mine eyes, saying—"

Oh, my murdered love! I will not betray thee. Thy words are hidden in my heart, and it is only thou who hast the key thereof.

CHAPTER XXI.

"DOWN TO PENZANCE."

"Gladly,
Yet sadly,
One presence to flee;
Ever
And never
A pris'ner to be;
Now up in heaven,
Now sad unto death;
Love is life's leaven,
Elixir and breath."

Translated from GOETHE.

STRENGTHENED to the resolution by a deep draught of a cordial with which I supplemented my coffee, I determined to tear myself away from temptation, and leave Gütsch as speedily as possible. And as I dressed with trembling hands I tried to persuade myself that I was suffering in a righteous cause. For the iron chains forged by education are the strongest earth knows of, and to rend one's self free from them the work of a Hercules.

Yet, so inconsistent are we, that, though I resolved never to see Thérèse again, the thought that maybe she had resolved the same maddened me. My pride rose haughtily and defiantly

against coercion. If I could not be the high priest of my own sacrifice, I would not submit to it at all.

My toilet completed and the time for action come, the power to act seemed taken from me. My fierce resolve, my fiercer opposition, were subdued into a piteous cry for mercy. "Let me see her once more," I cried, "only once, to say farewell forever?"

I sank back into my seat again, my resolution forgotten, every sense turned inward. I sat there for weeks, days, hours—I know not how long. They brought me food and drink, and I ate, I think. They talked to me, and I answered, I think. The body did its best to hide that it was tenantless, that the soul had gone from it.

But I know it was evening, and the heavy sky lightened and the stars shining, when William came and sat down beside me, looking at me with eyes in which was a whole world of pain, but not one gleam of anger.

Then the soul came back into my body with a rush, and the veil which had fallen over my brain was lifted.

"You know all?" I said.

"Yes, sir, yes; I think I do."

"And you are not angry?"

"Sir, I will not tell you a lie. I was that angry with you all yesterday that I could have killed you. I came to drive you out, and if you had resisted, I would have killed you as I would kill a wolf who had crept into the fold."

He stopped, trembling; the veins in his bronzed forehead swelling to thick cords, and the sweat covering him like beads.

"I would have killed you," he continued hoarsely, "as I would kill an animal that I had warmed and fed, and that repaid me by mortally wounding what was dearer to me than life."

He covered his face with his strong hands, and I knew, by the quivering of his whole body, that he was weeping. I had sinned, I had sinned, but Heaven knows how heavy then was my punishment!

I put my hand upon his arm; but for the moment it was more than he could bear, and he shook it off fiercely. Then with a painful effort he regained his self-control.

"Sir, I can't shake hands with you yet—I can't. Though I know by what I saw when I came to drive you out—hoping,

yes, hoping, that you would resist, and I might have a pretext to kill you—I saw, I say, that you were suffering too, and that stayed me. And now I have promised her, my maiden, and you wouldn't be safer with the mother who bore you than you are with me. You wouldn't, I say, you wouldn't."

He spoke loudly, as if trying to convince some one who was stoutly incredulous, and he clenched his hands with the passionate vehemence of a man who *must* hurt somebody, even if it be only himself.

"And I am glad you are not drowned, I am glad; but oh, if it had pleased God A'mighty to let some one else draw you out of the lake!"

"William," I cried, "my sin has been great, but you think worse of me than I deserve. I am afraid you think—"

"I think my maiden's heart is broke, sir, that's what I think. If I thought worse than that, no power on earth should save you—no, nor no power in heaven, neither."

"Have you sent her away?" The question was forced from my lips. I could not keep it back any longer.

For my heart began to heave and chafe in its dungeon, and my lips to tremble with passionate yearning to taste once more what I had forsworn forever. I had resolved to give my maiden up, but like the drunkard who has resolved never to touch another drop of that which has unmanned him, like the opium-eater who, knowing what he must pay for his ecstasy, has resolved to touch the poison no more, I trembled from head to foot with the vehemence of my desire. Resolution, unable to cope with Passion, fell prostrate. I must see her again or I should die.

"Yes, sir," answered William, not only to the question, but to the unspoken thought, "I have sent her away. You must never see her again."

"It's been bore in upon me," he continued, "to speak to you clear and open, and to save others if I can from that which she has suffered. For young gentlemen like you, brought up to think the world was made for 'em, do a sight o' wickedness, and cause such misery all along o' thoughtlessness as might make the angels in heaven weep to think on; but so far as we are concerned it might ha' been worse. My maiden's heart is broke, but there is no stain upon her honor."

"I never had a thought concerning her that was not as pure as herself," I interrupted.

"Ah, sir," said William, "deeds is like words; they spring up, we hardly knows how, and are awful, unalterable facts before we had quite shaped 'em into thoughts. The road to sin is like the road down our glaciers—soft and smooth and easy. We slide down, down, faster and faster, and there we are over the precipice, lost forever, before we had even seen to what we were driving."

I hung my head, and William went on:

"There's a deal in bringin' up, sir, and maybe if I'd been brought up as badly as you I might ha' been no better. But, thank God, I wasn't. Sin was made hard to me, sir. I'll tell you just a little story out o' my life, and let it be a warning to you.

"I were born in Cornwall, down to Penzance—maybe you've heard tell o' Penzance—and my mother were a Wesleyan. I used to go with her to Gwennap Pit to hear Wesley preach, and I never forgot it. We lived in a almshouse, for my father were dead—he died before I can remember.

"There was an old Quaker gentleman who lived near Penzance, and my mother had been a servant in his fam'ly—'twas he who got her into the almshouse, where we was very comfortable. He lived in a curious old house; it had been a cottage and had got added to, here a room and there a room, as they was wanted. This house stood in the most beautiful garden you can imagine. I've seen heaps of gardens, but never one like that; and as for flowers and fruit, there never was any like them in that garden down to Penzance.

"Well, I used to do a day's weeding now and then in this garden, and one day I was working there, and the strawberries was ripe, and the day was very hot, and as I worked the smell of 'em came towards me so sweet and temptin', and I couldn't help thinkin' about 'em.

"Now, I had been brought up honest. My mother used to say 'twas all one whether you stole a pin or a sovereign, and I never before thought o' tastin' unless some was given to me. But it was hot, and I was dry, and my eyes kept wanderin' to the strawberries and to one in particklar. There was such heaps on 'em.

“‘Thou shalt not steal,’ something seemed to say in my ear.

“But I was so dry. Well, I would go and get a drink of water.

“There was two ways to the well. One led right through the strawberries; the other way was longer round.

“I knew which way I ought to take very well, but somethin’ else seemed to say that I was a downright coward; that ’twas a heap braver to go into the thick o’ temptation than to run away from it, and I listened to this second voice. I didn’t drive it away. I listened to it.

“Oh, sir, that ain’t true courage. Them as go in pride of heart to the brink o’ temptation have no call to wonder if they fall over.”

He sighed deeply, then went on:

“Well, sir, I hadn’t listened long before I acted. I went through the strawberries, and before I had taken a dozen steps my eyes seemed forced to look at ’em, and I saw one—oh, so big and ripe and juicy!—and my hand seemed forced to take. What can you expect? When you listen to the devil, he soon teaches you that he is a heap cleverer than you are.

“So I stooped and picked, and before I knew rightly what I were doing I had one at my mouth.

“Then something occurred for which I have thanked God ever since, though then I thought I’d rather have died than had it happen. Somebody grasped me by the collar, and I looked up into the eyes of the master.

“And the strawberry, untasted, fell from my lips.

“I’ve seen a many kind faces since the old man died, sir, but I never saw a kinder. Folk has told me since that for all he was a simple Quaker gentleman, he was full of knowledge as well as love, and that many people in the great world knew and honored him. But, whatever he did for others, I know this, that he saved me, and that I shall bless him for it as long as I live.

“I think I see him now, in his broad-brimmed Quaker hat and knee-breeches; he was rayther short and stout, but looked such a true gentleman as I never saw since. You’d ha’ trusted him only to look at him, for there wasn’t a harsh line in his face, and his gray eyes, with their bushy white eyebrows, were as kind as they were keen. But I’d rayther any one in the world had found me stealing than him or my mother.

“‘Boy,’ he said, ‘what art thou doing?’

“‘’Twas the first one, sir,’ I stammered.

“‘How many apples dost thou think Eve ate before it was sin?’

“I sobbed aloud as he asked the question.

“‘Now I want to make sin so hard to thee that thou wilt never want to try it again,’ he said. ‘What had I better do—flog thee myself or take thee home to thy mother?’

“‘Oh, sir,’ I said, ‘flog me yourself, but don’t tell my mother.’

“‘I think I must,’ he said. ‘I have no right to deceive her, and besides, if she’s the Dorothy of old, she’d never think it was properly done unless she did it herself.’

“That was so true that I could not say another word. Everybody who knew my mother knew that. She had never struck me in her life, but I knew if I had to be struck she would a heap rayther do it herself, and that she’d be sure to do it thorough.

“So I was marched out through the beautiful garden to my home in the almshouse, where my mother sat knitting. She looked up amazed as our shadows fell over her; then after a few words from my master looked alone at me.

“Sir, I never needed to be told again what stealing only a strawberry meant to her. And my master let go of my collar to take her hand, saying, in a voice that sounded as if tears had got into it, ‘Dorothy, if I had known I would have kept it from thee.’

“I got my flogging, of course, and no light one neither, but ’twas nothing, nothing after that look. When I went back to my work the next day, I had to go and ask my master to forgive me. He lifted up my chin and looked steadily into my eyes.

“‘Now, my son,’ he said, ‘remember next time thou art tempted that there’s a flogging at the end of it.’

“‘Yes, sir,’ I answered, ‘and my mother.’

“Well,” continued William, looking hard at me, “it were bore in upon me that, maybe, ’twere something with you as with me and the strawberry—you didn’t know what road you was going on. One kiss ’ud hurt nobody—”

He paused as if a sudden thought had struck him, and looked before him in blank bewilderment. “But the strawberry,” he

muttered, "what about it? The soft rain and the sunshine didn't ripen it for that. Was it ripened to be thrown away?—it, the sweetest and the ruddiest."

The great enigma, the terrible enigma which has racked men's brains oft enough, was suggesting itself to him now, and under the pain of it his strong Christian faith trembled and waxed faint. "What about the strawberry?" he repeated, "what about it?"

He did not know that he would have puzzled all the sages and divines the world ever heard of by that simple question. He did not know that behind it lay all knowledge; beyond it, nothing but faith.

CHAPTER XXII.

A LION IN THE WAY.

"And yet, believe me, good as well as ill,
Woman's at best a contradiction still."—POPE.

Nothing but faith. Yet if we seek faith as God would have it, it is not to the learned that we must turn. "Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."

William's struggle was but a short one. He could not understand, but he could believe that God did, and that he was good. His brow cleared; his fists slowly unclenched themselves.

"What's in a kiss now?" he continued, turning his eyes delicately away from my crimsoning face. "You may kiss your sister; but when you kiss a maiden not your sister, is the kiss the same? Oh, sir, you can't hoodwink Natur' like that. She knows what she's about if you don't. You sow the seed, thinking nothing o' the harvest, and yet it ripens; and there it is with all its poisonous fruit, and you have to gather it. 'Tis so pleasant and so easy to say pretty things to a maiden, to watch the rosy color rising and falling, to call up at your will bright smiles or tears to the tender eyes. But the man who does this, knowin' all the time that there can be no rightful end to it, is a greater villain than a murderer of the body, for he murders a loving human heart."

"I have done bitter wrong," I cried, stung to the quick, "but I did it in ignorance. And, believe me, William, I never knew what suffering meant before yesterday."

"Sir, 'tis plain enough that you too have some'at to bear, and I'm glad of it, for I'd swore to make you sorry some road. I'm a quiet man, mostly, but there's one thing can make a wild beast of me, and that's to see my maiden suffer. I'd cut off my right hand to save her a tear. Cut off my hand—if 'twould make her happy I'd cut off my head."

He turned away his honest eyes that I might not see them filling.

"That woman yonder," he continued, pointing to the door between us and the *Schenkstube*, "does not love my maiden because"—he smiled, faintly—"there was some as thought she would make me a good second wife, and I—well, I loved Thérèschen best. So when she came with her warnings about you and her, I thought 'twas the old tale and paid small attention. For, if you were a fool, I said, my *Mädel* had got sense enough for both."

I hardly winced, so eager was I for him to continue.

"You see, sir, 'tisn't for want of lovers, young as she is, that my maiden hasn't been married over and over, but she turned up her saucy nose at every one on 'em. 'There isn't one of 'em fit to fasten thy shoe-buckle, father,' she'd say. 'They've all got some'at. Some's miserly and some seem to have holes in their pockets. Some's so silly that if they were women all the world 'ud laugh at 'em, and some so wise that they wouldn't want a wife as could see thro' 'em.'

"'And they're all masterful,' she says, 'and I've been too long the missus to want a lord to rule over me.' And then she'd put her soft arms round my neck till she could do what she liked wi' me.

"Ah, sir, I doubt I've been over-confident, and now am getting punished for it."

He subsided into a little muse for a few moments.

"When the Föhn was signalled, sir, that time that you was in it, me and my maiden had been makin' merry over a letter from a young man in Lucerne, as had asked her to marry him, now the third time, and seemed as if he wouldn't be satisfied.

"'I'll send him a basket this time,' said Thérèse, wickedly,

‘as ’ll make him wish he’d been content with what he’s got already.’

“You know, sir, the maidens here call it sending a basket when they say No to a lover.

“‘*Mädel*,’ I said, ‘thy time ’ll come yet, and then thou’lt talk t’other side thy mouth. Take care how thou laughs at love. Take care, or thou’lt pick up a crooked stick at last, fit for nothing but to beat thee.’

“So I talked to her, sir, in the way we talk to our children, to hide the folly in our hearts. For I were prouder than she of her sperrit and of her beauty. God forgive me, so I was.

“She looked up at me with the sudden change which seems to make of her sometimes a creature far above us—with that grave, earnest look which comes so rare and passes so quick. And the color in her eyes goes darker and deeper until they look like two deep wells of water, in which only God’s stars are reflected.

“Then she put her soft little face close to mine, whispering, ‘Father, no man alive ’ll ever be so good to me as thou art, and if thou wasn’t my father, and came a-courting me, I’d marry thee with all my heart, and know I shouldn’t ever live to repent it. But when I see how sweet the men are on the lasses afore they are their wives, and how little count they makes on ’em arterwards, I wonder how the *Mädels* can be so blind as to sell themselves for a few sweet words and a few kisses, and I thank the dear God that he gave me eyes to see.’

“She had just said them words when we both noticed how dark it was growing; the sky was all black except in the west, which was of an awful red. I knew the Föhn was coming. Thérèse knew it too.

“‘Father,’ she cried, ‘look, there is a boat upon the lake and two men in it. They will be drowned.’

“‘Ay, my *Mädel*,’ I said. ‘The Lord have mercy on their souls.’

“‘Oh, save them!’ she cried, sobbing, as the bell rang out. ‘Father, save them!’

“But the mist had closed the boat in, and we saw it no more. Again the bell rang out. You must have heard it, sir?”

“Yes, we heard it,” I said, shuddering at the recollection.

“Every man, woman, and child, all along both shores o’ the

lake, sir, know the meanin' o' that bell, and in a few moments every man, except the old and sick, was down upon the shore. I kissed the wet cheek of my maiden, and bid her put out the lamps and the candles, and pray to God to give us help, and then, with Peter's Nick at my side, I ran down upon the pier.

"Sir, Nick and me is both big, strong fellows, as you know, and we pushed our way through the crowd and got to the far end, and clung there in spite of the darkness, and the roar o' the wind, and the splash o' the maddened water, and the fierce flash of the lightning, which made the darkness deeper than ever arter it. 'Herre,' said Peter's Nick, 'if I'm drowned, you'll be a friend to my *Frau* and the little 'un, who's too small yet to know what it means to lose a father, won't you?' We was close together when he said it, but the spray o' the water was in our eyes, a blinding of us, and the roar o' the thunder was in our ears, a deafening of us, and the glare o' the lightning was all around us, so that when I could see him at all, or he me, 'twas as if we was standing in a blaze o' fire, and his words was like a whisper; I only just managed to hear 'em.

"'Nick,' says I, 'thou'rt a brave lad, and in my will I've got thee and thy heirs written down for five hundred francs, seeing that it's but thy right and due, for thou helped me to earn it. If any hurt should happen to thee, Nick,' said I, 'thy *Bub* shall never know what 'tis to want a father, nor thy wife a friend. But thou'rt never thinkin' surely o' riskin' thy life to-day to save them as God has doomed; for no boat,' I said, 'could live a moment on the lake to-day. We'd better do what the wives and the maids are doing—pray for their souls,' I said. So I spoke, sir, forgettin' what my mother, who were a Methody, had told me over and over when I were downhearted—that there were nothing too hard for the Lord.

"Whether Nick heerd me or no, I cannot tell; mostlike not, for I couldn't hear myself, the words being tore away out o' my mouth as soon as they were spoken. But I pressed the brave fellow's hand and he mine, and we both forgot, I'm sure, that I were the master and he the servant, on the borders o' that unknown land to which we was all of us bound, for two human beings were perishing close to us, and we had no power to put out a hand to save 'em.

"We tried to force our eyes to pierce the darkness, until they

seemed as if they would spring out o' their sockets from the violence o' the effort. Then I heerd Nick cry out loud—a sharp, sharp cry that pierced a way for itself through the roar o' the wind and the water—and the lightning glared out like an answer, and we all saw a boat close upon the pier wi' two men in it, who were jerked out as the boat dashed itself to pieces close to our feet, and one of 'em hardly touched the water, so quick were Nick to catch him.

“But the other, a young man wi' a pale, handsome face, and wide-open eyes, looking straight at me, rose a moment wi' the wave that were carrying him back again, and then went down into the depths. And that look seemed to go straight to my heart, and to draw me in to him into the water. I never thought what I were doing—if I had thought, maybe I shouldn't ha' done it; but the next moment there I were, having cried out to the other men to give me a rope for the love o' God, and it was boiling madly round me, and bubbling in my ears. And I forgot you in the midst of it, and only thought o' my darling *Mädel*, and how she would fret about her father.

“Sir, how I found and saved you only the dear God knows. I suppose my hands knew what they were sent into the water to do, though my head had forgotten. But, all of a sudden, just when I was losing my senses, the slack rope under my arms tightened, and the lads drew me to the shore again, and you along wi' me, and I heard their long, ringing cheers above wind and water. And that's how you was saved, sir, and the first part of what's been made clear to me it were my duty to tell you.”

As he stopped to blow his nose and wipe away a tear that had gathered, I found that I, too, had been weeping. I could not thank the man before me for having saved my life in meaningless words, after I had already repaid him in a manner which, as he had quietly told me, had broken his heart. But could any good thing come from one whose whole life had been misspent and wasted? Can a bramble, however sharply pruned, produce grapes? Noble deeds are the blossoms of noble lives, and no chance growth to be found anywhere. Yet for all this—oh, unsolvable enigma of human motive, as unsolvable as human life!—I went on groping for light down into earth's dark caverns, nor dreamed of turning my face upward to the heavens and the

sunshine. The only road wherein was happiness lay straight enough before me, but a lion was in the way, and I dared not venture into it—a lion in petticoats, the dreaded frown of whom is more potential than that of an angel sent from God, brandishing a sword of fire.

CHAPTER XXIII.

AS A WOMAN.

“Sir Ulrich sings a well-known song,
Remorse the motive in it;
And when 'tis finished, 'twon't be long
Till he again begin it.”

Translated from HEINE (Ballads).

UP to this point William had got on bravely, telling me what he had to say in his usual grave and solid way, and rarely letting his feelings, though deeply stirred, interfere with his straightforwardness. But now he made a long pause, and from his eyes, turned downwards towards the tiled floor, great tears were falling. Every heavy drop was forced from him by a heavier pressure, leaving behind, not relief, but barrenness. And when they ceased to fall, and he turned his pained eyes slowly towards me, a something in their expression checked the words of sorrow on my lips, and compelled me to withdraw my unworthy grief into the background before the dignity of his. I saw the struggle going on between his resolution and the indignant pain it was causing him. I saw the pride he deemed he had conquered rising up within him to reinforce the pain.

Yet I could not bear the delay. The overture had but indicated the theme, and I was panting for the climax. The knife still rankled in the cancer, increasing the evil instead of cutting it away. I cried out to him to complete the cruel operation for the love of God.

“There is nothing,” I said, “that I will not do to atone.”

The very idea of atonement roused up in William a sentiment of fierce anger. He withdrew his heavy hand from my knee, and the corrugations on his bronzed brow deepened into sternness. “Words, sir, words,” he said, bitterly, “and mayhap

some of your superfluous gold into the bargain. That's your notion of atonement. But me and Thérèse don't want neither—me and Thérèse won't have it. *Wir danken, sir, wir danken.*”

He got up and began to pace the roughly tiled floor, his strong hands clenching, his strong frame bowed—oh, how much more since yesterday!—his face working as he struggled to quench the rising wrath and remain true to his own resolution. The fight was very fierce while it lasted, and for several minutes I hardly dared to breathe. Then he slowly sat down by my side once more, turning his dimmed eyes towards me again.

“Sir, I've made up my mind to tell you all. There's other maidens in the world besides mine, and her trouble may be the means, perhaps, of savin' some one else. I will tell you, sir, and may it be a lesson.”

Yet he hesitated so long that I was forced to urge him.

“You think,” said I, “that your daughter—you imagine—”

But I found it harder than he did, and stopped confused.

“Let me say it for you, sir,” said William. “You liked my Thérèse, you admired her pretty ways, and to my thinkin' no fine lady ever had prettier ones. And though she has her faults—bless her!—they are like the thorns to the rose; it wouldn't be a rose, nor smell half so sweet, without 'em.

“You didn't mean no harm, sir, at first. I do believe that. You ain't one o' them scoundrels who sets their wicked wits to work to win a maiden's heart, only to break it.”

“God forbid!” I cried.

“You liked her company—who could help liking it?—your vanity was tickled to see how much she liked yours—my poor lamb!—you thought, maybe, a *Schenkmädel's* good fame weren't worth much thinking about.”

“I never thought that, William. You wrong me there.”

“Well, sir, mebbe not. I've promised not to be hard upon you. Besides which I ain't quick-tempered, or I should ha' handled you last night a heap rougher than I'm handling of you now. I like, too, to know for certain that I'm striking the right person when I do strike, because, though I'm slow to do it, when I strike, I strike hard.”

He paused a moment, sorrowfully shaking his head as he looked out upon the stars.

“'Twas Fleurette as told me what were going on, and who

brought me to the door to see it for myself through the key-hole. (I never looked through a keyhole before in my life, and don't never want to again.) And when I see her at your feet and you a-kissin' of her, and she—oh, my God!—I said never a word to the woman beside me, for she were glad of it, but went straight to my own room, and took down a loaded pistol and a horsewhip—one for you, one for her."

"She is as innocent as a new-born babe," I cried. "Surely you will not visit my sin on her?"

"Sir, nobody needs to plead with me for my maiden. There's a voice in my heart which speaks up for her always, and has stayed my hand many a time when, mebbe, it had ought to have fallen. And it spoke up for her then, and I remembered, too, that you were weak and ill, and in my house. So I sat down by my bedside, and sat there, sir, all the long night."

I had sinned, I had sinned, but Heaven knows how heavy then was my punishment!

"When the morning broke, the sky red as blood, I went to my Thérèse's door, and bade her get up and come out to me on the terrace. Very soon she was there, lookin' bright enough as she came towards me, her face all lit up by the red sunlight. She slipped her little hand in my arm, and we both stood still to look at Uri Rothstock and the *Gletscher* upon it, shining like a lake of blood; and we stood long, for I was loath to speak, until the red light died away from the mountains and mists began to settle there.

"At last I ventured to look sideways at my maiden, and I saw that her cheeks were palin', and her face drawn and sad, and her eyes lifted timidly to mine, as if they would fain have asked a question and yet were afraid.

"What art thinking about, my *Mädel*?" I said, tenderly. I had meant to be a bit sharp with her, but that deep, deep, troubled look were too much for me. It always is.

"I was thinkin'," she answered softly, 'how beautiful it all is, father, and that heaven itself cannot be lovelier than our Switzerland, and that—'

Here she flung herself into my arms and burst out into a frightened cry, holding me so close that I could feel her little heart a-beatin' quick against mine. I had all the trouble in the world to comfort her, and her smile when it come was as

weak and watery as the sunshine trying in vain to break through the clouds.

“‘Tell thy father, *Mädel*,’ I said; ‘sure thou hast no reason to fear him.’

“‘’Tis no great thing to tell thee,’ she answered, becomin’, all in a winkin’ as it were, once more my mischievous Thérèse, and smilin’ through her tears. ‘I want thee to give me leave and money to go to Lucerne.’

“‘To Lucerne, *Mädel*!’ I was forced to sit down on the little bench outside, I was that surprised.

“Meanwhile she stood lookin’ at me, her hat hangin’ behind her, and her long hair movin’ with the rising wind. And she seemed to say, ‘Don’t go makin’ any fuss about it; it won’t be no manner of use.’

“And, sir, how could any one say nay; she looked so pretty, the mountains rising grand behind her, the shining lake below?

“‘First the money, father,’ she said, coaxingly; ‘time enough for the leave afterwards.’

“‘Indeed, and suppose I say no?’

“‘Then thou’lt have to eat thy words and say yes after all, and I wouldn’t advise thee.’

“Now, was there ever such a maiden? And don’t you think I must be a great fool, sir, to have brought her up like that? A moment before she had been cryin’ as if her heart must break, and now her voice was fresh and joyous. Yet I was glad to hear it so, and disposed to let her have her way. Besides, it might answer my purpose as well as what I had been thinkin’ of.

“So I took her hand and made her sit down beside me, saying a little sternly, ‘That’s not the way to speak to thy father, *Mädel*; thou must try to remember that thou’rt not a little child any more, but a grown maiden, who ought to know what is fit and proper. But, without being too hard upon thee for what is more my fault than thine, I’ll give thee leave and money to go to Lucerne on one condition.”

“‘And what is that, father?’ she said, quietly.

“‘That thou’lt stay there until I send for thee.’

“She pulled away her hand sudden and sharp; and I drew my breath hard for the struggle, in which, however much it cost me, she would have to give way; and her eyes flashed, and her little hand clenched itself.

"But she did not speak a word. She sat down beside me on the stone bench, her eyes full of frightened anger, and fought the fight out in her own mind, the while I prayed to the dear God to help her. And then her head sank upon her hands.

"At last my maiden said, in a low voice :

"'Father, you are right. I will do just what you tell me.'

"'You know what I mean, my darling?'

"'Yes, father.'

"'And you know if I hurt you it is because I cannot help it.'

"'Yes, oh yes, father.' And I saw her lip bleeding from the sharp way in which she bit it.

"'Father,' said my *Mädel*, after a little while, 'may I go first to see Madame Sauerwein, who is ill, poor thing, in the village?'

"'Why, yes, if thou likes, maiden,' I said, surprised at her thinking of such a trifle then. 'The diligence for Lucerne starts from near there. Take an inside place; we shall have a thorough downpour to-day.'

"She looked up at me so pitiful that it was a'most more than I could bear, and said, in a low voice :

"'Father, thou'lt not tell Fleurette why thou hast sent me away?'

"I could hardly help smilin' a bit at this. And I thought I knew now why she wanted to go to Madame Sauerwein's.

"'No, maiden, I will not tell her.'

"'And, father—'

"'Well, my *Mädel*?'

"'May I—' And here she stopped again, and I saw that her cheeks were red as fire.

"'Mayst thou what, Thérèse? Speak, my *Mädel*.'

"'Father, thou wilt not understand why I want it. Part of what thou hast got into thy head is true, father, though I only found it out quite for certain this very morning.'

"She stopped again. Oh, it was hard to see how she suffered!

"'I knew yesterday, father,' she went on, 'that his anger could hurt me even more than thine, and his forgiveness give me joy greater than anything, but I did not know quite—'

"She covered her face with her hands.

"'But part is wrong, father, and if thou hadst been the least little bit less good and kind—and, father, though thou hast hurt

me almost more than I can bear, I never loved thee half so well before—never knew before how noble—’

“She couldn’t keep back her tears any longer. She leaned her head upon my shoulder, sobbin’ as if her tender heart was breakin’.

“Oh, it was hard to see what she had to suffer!

“But she went on again:

“‘If it had not been for that, father, I might have been tempted to deceive thee, but now I cannot, though I warn thee that, if thou refuse permission for what I ask, I shall disobey thee.’

“‘Thérèse!’

“‘Father, no one shall ever say that Thérèse is a coward. I will pluck the folly out of my heart. I myself will sharpen the knife to murder it.’

“‘Thérèse,’ I cried again, almost afraid of my own *Mädel*, for she had sprung up from her seat, and her long black hair was flyin’ in the wind, and her eyes were flashin’, and her lips set as firm as a rock. And she looked, I thought, just like one o’ them grand women, that Joachim Spritmeier in the village tells us of, who led men on to victory.

“‘I’d scorn,’ she said, ‘to make myself a laughing-stock for the village, like Aennchen Amme, because Hänsli, of the “Golden Lion,” went a-courtin’ the Gretel instead of her. And I should be a bigger fool, because I knew all the time—’

“She stopped again, wringin’ her poor little hands till my heart seemed fit to burst.

“‘So, father, you’ll let me write to him, won’t you?’

“‘Write to him, Thérèse! Are you mad?’

“‘No, father, no. Trust me this once, and all my life long I’ll do your bidding. Do you remember my telling you that I should never marry? That was a girl’s foolish speech, father, and deserved to be laughed at. To-day, before God, I repeat it, as a woman!’

“She turned her face up’ard to the darkened sky and clasped her hands—her lips movin’, her face workin’. And the rain-drops began to patter down upon it, as if an angel up in heaven were weepin’ too.

“Then she put her hand into mine, calm once more, and I led her back into the house.

“When she came to your door, sir, I saw her face turn white,

and she leaned her head against it. Then she looked up into my face, whisperin'—oh, in such a tone of pain :

“ ‘ Father, let me stay until he is awake, and carry in his coffee once more, and say good-bye. I shall never see him again. He will think me cruel and unkind.’ ”

“ ‘ All the cruelty is his, and may God give it back to him tenfold,’ I said, and every drop of blood within me cursed you that moment. But she dragged me from the door, as if she thought my anger might do you harm, and she flung herself upon her knees before me.

“ ‘ Get up,’ I said ; ‘ there’s no need for thee to kneel to thy father.’ ”

“ ‘ I will not get up,’ she said, “if I stay here forever, until thou hast promised me not to say one angry word to him, but to care for him until he is able to go, as if he were myself. It is not his fault. He told me long ago that his heart belonged to another.’ ”

“ ‘ The puppy !’ I said. ‘ As if he didn’t know that that was just the way to set thee longing for it.’ ”

“ ‘ Hast thou promised, father ?’ ”

“ ‘ I heard Fleurette coming. I wouldn’t have had her see my maiden like that for the world.

“ ‘ Yes, yes,’ I said, ‘ get up.’ And I pulled her to her feet again. She ran away just as Fleurette came in.

“ ‘ What’s the matter wi’ Thérèse ?’ said she.

“ ‘ Cryin’ a bit, because I’ve said nay to her.’ ”

“ ‘ What, thou’st said nay ? It ’ud be the first time,’ said Fleurette.

“ ‘ Bah !’ I said ; ‘ get on with thy work, woman, and mind thy own business.’ ”

“ ‘ Did she persuade thee that kissin’ an English milord is a different sort o’ thing to kissin’ a Frenchman ?’ ”

“ ‘ Woman,’ I said, ‘ thou’st had thy bite and sup sixteen year in this house, because the *Kindli* was nursed at thy breast ; but say one more word like that, and thou must find another shelter.’ ”

“ And she said no more. ’Tisn’t often, sir, that I speak sharp to them o’ my household, but when I do, they minds me.

“ And now, sir,” concluded William, “I’ve told you all, and God grant I haven’t done it for no good. Stay here till you are well ; and may God forgive you.”

But he did not give me his hand when he went, leaving me to my reflections.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A LETTER.

“Live a coward in thine own esteem,
Letting I dare not wait upon I would.”

Lady Macbeth.

“Nous n'avons pas assez de force pour suivre toute notre raison.”

ROCHEFOUCAULD (*Pensées et Maximes*).

I WAS dressed, resting wearily upon the bench outside the *Schenke*, longing to be well enough to do something, wondering what I should do, when William brought me two letters.

The overhanging roof of the old house, weighted with large stones, sheltered me a little from the noonday sun, which had already dried and warmed the spot where I rested. Some friendly hand had spread a mat under my feet. Below me lay the lake, pale in its noonday listlessness; opposite rose the snow-capped mountains. A few gnats danced gayly before me, behind hummed a drowsy bluebottle, while a solitary bird sang low and softly in the wood beyond. Afar off I heard the distant *Yodeln* of the herdsman and the tinkling bells of the cattle he guarded. Oh, how peaceful was nature and how little able to soothe my troubled heart!

All along I had been sustained by a vague hope that Providence would send some one to save me, or work a miracle on my behalf. All along I had half believed in help from outside to sustain and support me. But William's very nobleness became my strongest enemy, and Moppert was absent when I wanted him most. There was no one else, no one! I must stand alone or fall.

Such a necessity comes—*must come*—to every one of us. We cannot always rest upon our neighbors. Each is responsible for himself before God. We are, more or less, the carvers out of our destinies. We are the framers of our spiritual lives. The plea uttered by our first father is as unavailable as it is cowardly and base: “The woman tempted me, and I did eat.”

The letter I first glanced at was in a strange hand. A man's

—an Englishman's—firm, clear, and decisive. The other was also in a strange hand and bore the postmark "Lucerne." As I touched it my fingers thrilled, and the trembling of every nerve told my heart from whom it came.

Oh, my Thérèse! Whatever comes between us, God made us for one another; even if thou wert but a beggar-maid and I a King Cophetua.

I laid this second letter against my beating heart. I laughed and cried over it. I pressed it to my cheek, letting the strange something emanating from it thrill my nerves anew, and kissing it as if it were the dear lips for which I was yearning.

Then I broke the seal and read as follows:

"*Hochgeehrter, gnädiger Herr.*"

I smiled, even laughed loudly over this formal commencement, a spasmodic and unmirthful laughter which made my heart tremble, then read on:

"By this time, monsieur" (ah! she could not help it! the old word uttered in a hundred different tones, angrily, imperatively, tenderly, beseechingly, now in mirth, now softened by tears—the old word, worth a thousand endearments, crept in among the stiff unnaturalness of the distant German ones!), "my father will have told you—for it is now two days ago, and I know you will have missed me—that he has sent me away, not to return until you have left Switzerland.

"He may have told you, too—I almost think he has—the reason why. If not, let Thérèse tell you herself. For, though I should die of shame to even breathe it if I were a girl in your own position—a lady fit to mate with you—I am not ashamed to speak now. If the grave stood between us we should not be more separated than we are. To my mind it does stand between us, and I am speaking to you from the other side of it.

"My father sent me away, monsieur, and I consented to go, even without a *Lebewohl*, not because I care too little for you, but because I care infinitely too much; because, if I had ventured to come to you and say good-bye, I should have revealed what I am revealing now, without the safeguard of distance. And you would have pitied me, perhaps, monsieur, even in the midst of your profound contempt. You would have given me *pity* for

love. There are many stones love will take for bread, but not that one, the hardest and cruellest of all. It would have choked, not my love, monsieur, but my life.

“For love, monsieur, even when it is what the world calls hopeless, is the grandest, the most ennobling gift that God can give to man. Even poor Thérèse is not to-day what she was yesterday. I look upon the world and the human creatures in it with different eyes now. I love them all for your sake. I was a foolish, giddy, thankless child a month ago; now I am a woman, thanking God for having made me one—thanking him above all for the woman’s capacity for loving.

“So, whatever you do—however hardly you think of Thérèse—spare her what she verily does not need—your pity. Once I told you, monsieur, in one of my naughty tempers, that I cast your gratitude back in your teeth; now I cast back pity. I do not need it; only those do who never know what love means, and I am not sad or miserable, but profoundly happy.

“So happy, that I thank the dear God every hour for sending you to us, also because it was my father who saved you out of the cruel water, and I who helped to nurse you back to strength. So happy, that I ask nothing more of life than to give me opportunity to prove, by love and kindness to others, how real and strong is my gratitude.

“I have written so much already that my hand begins to ache, and yet I have not written a word of what I meant to tell you. For, monsieur, the work I came here to do is done, and done well. *She* is with us, sleeping sweetly on the bed close beside me; her golden hair upon the pillow; her fair face turned towards mine; her gentle breathing plainly audible when I stay my pen.

“And to know her there, and to know what the knowledge will be to you, is joy; yes, joy inex—

“Monsieur, the tears that blotted out that word are all happy ones. You know Thérèse would not tell a lie.

“She is very, very beautiful, monsieur. Since I have seen and spoken to her I do not wonder at you, *nicht ein Bisschen*. And her soul is as beautiful as her body. It is a woman who tells you that, and women understand women better than men do. No affectation of goodness can deceive *them*. You have a great deal to do, monsieur, to make yourself worthy of her, a

very great many faults to conquer and subdue ; but you *will* subdue them for the sake of your love, and then, together, may you be very, very happy !

“ I meant to tell you a great deal more about her, monsieur ; but Monsieur Moppert must do that now. He came here with me, came on purpose to help me. We were only just in time : a few hours later, and they would have been on the road to Hungary.

“ I will not pretend to be better than I am. I had my wicked moment, and during it I hated her more intensely than I ever hated anything in my life—would have given worlds to have found her so polluted as to render her unworthy of any one’s regard—wished her to know something of the intolerable pain—

“ My lamp burns low, monsieur, and my hand trembles, and I fancy I am hardly writing what I meant to say. She moved in her sleep just now, and cried out loud for help, and her voice cut me to the heart. But her troubles are over now, are they not ? You will love her as she deserves and make her happy ?

“ These foolish tears which blot the words again, and make them almost illegible, are only shed for her.

“ *Doch noch ein Wörtchen.* Do you take care of yourself now that I am gone ? Do you take your medicine and your *Suppe* regularly ? Remember you must not spoil the work Thérèse began ; remember that your life is now consecrated to another.

“ This is Wednesday, and on Saturday Monsieur Moppert will be with you.

“ I can hardly bear to think that these are the last words you will ever see or hear from Thérèse, that the *Lebewohl* I am writing dare not be followed by an *Auf Wiedersehen*. But perhaps in heaven, monsieur, we may meet again—there, where all men are equal.

“ May Mary, Mother of God, bless you both ! This is my daily prayer.

“ *Hochachtungsvoll und ergebenst,*

“ MARIE THÉRÈSE EVELINE PASCOE.”

I thought I had fought a battle and gained it, but the enemy had only beaten a sham retreat, and now, freshly reinforced, at-

tacked me in the rear. And oh ! this second onslaught found me at a terrible disadvantage ; my strength was exhausted, my armor cast aside, and, unharnessed and defenceless, I was now wholly at his mercy !

CHAPTER XXV.

LETTER NUMBER TWO.

"Double-barbed is Cupid's arrow ;
Should it hit thee, heart and marrow,
Patiently endure the pain ;
Never seek, good counsel spurning,
To extract the barb ; in turning
'Twill but tear thy heart in twain."

Translated from BÜRGER.

I HAD forgotten all about the other letter with its correct English address, and it probably would have decayed on the spot where it had fallen but for its being recalled to my remembrance later on in the evening by the receipt of a somewhat bulky packet, the outside of which bore my name in the same well-formed though rather stiff characters. The letter had been dated from the "Hôtel des Trois Rois" in Lucerne ; the packet came from the primitive Wirthschaft "Zum Goldenen Löwen" in the village of Brunnen. My unknown correspondent was following me up with a vengeance. I began to think it was high time to see what he wanted.

I went out again upon the terrace, picked up the neglected letter, opened it, and read as follows :

"SIR,—Your sister Aileen has commissioned me to give you a packet containing a manuscript in her own hand, and a few other trifles which she hopes you will do her the kindness to accept. I shall be in Brunnen to-morrow evening, and will send them up to you by a special messenger, according to promise. Should you wish to see me after perusing the MS., I will do myself the honor of calling upon you. I shall remain twenty-four hours in Brunnen. If, during that time, you send for me, I am at your disposal ; if not, I shall presume that you prefer not to know me.

"Your present address I obtained from the proprietor of this hotel. I regret to hear that you have been ill.

"Yours faithfully,

"GERALD MALCOLMSON."

This very dry, matter-of-fact, yet puzzling epistle contained two or three rather startling clauses. "Your sister Aileen." For the world, my sister Aileen was Miss Aileen Smythe, of course; what on earth did this absolute stranger mean by writing so familiarly about her? "I shall presume that you prefer not to know me." Why should my sister's trusted messenger imagine the possibility of that?

There being nobody to answer these questions, I turned my attention to the packet that might contain the solution of them. It did contain it in a very lengthened form. Swathed in two or three utterly useless articles of feminine handiwork, fit for nothing but a bazaar, I drew forth a bundle of paper, neatly sewed together, and closely written upon. This handwriting I instantly recognized as no forgery to impose upon me, but really and truly that of my sister Aileen.

Now, I liked Aileen. I am not sure that the small modicum of affection I bestowed upon her could be dignified by the name of love, but she was not totally indifferent to me. I had taken up arms against the dragon Atkinson principally on her account. I could not think of her moist little kisses upon my cheek without a sensation of tenderness. I had long ago made up my mind that when I was lord of Ballyacora Hall no one should hector my little Aileen but myself, and above all things she should never have a husband to scold her until I had fully satisfied myself that he would do it mildly. Indeed, I sometimes thought, when my tenderness was at its climax, that I would never let her marry at all.

If this Mr. Gerald Malcolmson therefore had come to Switzerland to get my help to enable him to approach Aileen as a suitor, he would have to submit to being called pretty smartly over the coals.

Of course communications of some kind or another came to me from time to time from Ballyacora Hall. My father's epistles were usually full of glowing anticipations concerning a man child yet to be born into a world anxiously awaiting his advent

—*his* grandson and a duke's—but, as they also usually contained money, I put that thought away from me as something that would wait till to-morrow. Florence's, Mabel's, and Aileen's were short rehearsals in various keys, from F sharp to G minor, of their own dull lives and their wish that something would happen to enliven them: "Even a murder"—so, on one occasion, had written Mabel, who seemed to be developing, according to promise, into an odd character—"would be refreshing. I look round sometimes and wonder whether I should not be a public benefactor by getting up some such variation." But only Aileen's—pretty, blue-eyed Aileen's—ever contained a word of genuine love.

The last month, however, had witnessed the advent of no letter at all—and, to tell the truth, I had neither sorrowed nor wondered over the omission. Since that memorable event on the promenade of Lucerne, the current of my life had set in a fresh direction, and, fascinated by the new scenes and impressions among which it had conducted me, I had almost forgotten the stagnant pool of home and its forlorn inmates. The prince, the beautiful lady, Moppert, most of all Thérèse, had so completely filled my thoughts and my life as to leave no room for them, until they appeared as an army of phantoms in the rear of society, all holding murderous knives wherewith to murder my love.

Except once. When the lady turned her face and fixed her beautiful eyes on me, I had been struck by a certain resemblance to Aileen. Her hair was of the same golden hue, her eyes of the same azure, her delicate, transparent skin of the same purity. Of course she was a hundred times more beautiful. That goes without saying.

I have finished the manuscript. Here it is, unabridged. Aileen's story is so closely interwoven with mine that I cannot separate them.

CHAPTER XXVI.

AILEEN.

“Planted deep within the flower
Lies concealed the coming fruit:—
Once obedience learned—the hour
Strikes for tend’rest love to shoot.”

Translated from GOETHE (Ballads).

“THE gentleman who will bring you this, Charley, with the smoking-cap and the purse, both of which I have knitted for you with my own hands, and cried over, too, more than you would imagine (I don’t think they’re *much* stained, though), and will you wear them for my sake?—the cap, I mean—is—no, I *cannot* bring myself to tell you yet. I am trembling all over, and shaking in my shoes like an old woman, at the thought of how angry you will be, because your anger will hurt me more than all theirs—those at home I mean—seeing that I love you best.

“Yet I *must* tell you, whether you are angry or not. Well, he is—good gracious! I wonder whether you are beginning to frown, or gnash your teeth, or clench your fists, or do any of those horrible things that men do when they are angry, just to frighten us poor women out of our wits! I’ll fetch my vinaigrette before I write any more, for fear.

“Well, he is—he is—do you remember when you went away, promising to bring me back a husband? Silly old boy! As if any pattern of the article would do; as if Aileen had no taste of her own. Keep your husbands for them that want them. *I’m provided for.*

“There now, the secret’s out, and with it all my fear has gone too. I am afraid of no man alive, Charley, with *him* to protect me. They have cast me out of what *they* call home, but my home is with him. Papa says, in a furious letter, that he and my family disown me forever. What of that? He—Gerald, I

mean—is father, mother, brother, and sister to me, all in one, and husband too. I had to choose between him and them, and I have chosen with all my heart. I cannot repent it.

“Only a few days ago I was talking to my husband about you, and he suggested that I should do what I am doing now. ‘Give your brother a chance to be your friend,’ he said. ‘Tell him your side of the story. Let him judge for himself.’

“In compliance with this suggestion I am writing you, not simply a formal announcement, as they do in the newspapers, you know, but the why and the wherefore of it. For the sake of justice, Charley, read to the end, before you judge and condemn me. Even a criminal has a right to plead in his own defence, has he not? And Englishmen—at least I have been taught to believe so—love fair play, even when they fag one another at Eton—eh? That’s a rhyme, but I didn’t mean it to be, which brings luck, doesn’t it?

“To begin, then, Charley, your little Aileen is legally and lawfully married by special leave and license of the dear old Archbishop of Canterbury, whose foot I’d rather kiss than that of any pope alive. Yet Gerald laughs when I say what a darling old love he must be, and wonder whether I shall ever have an opportunity of thanking him. I know he thinks I’m a little goose—Gerald, I mean—but I’m not nearly such a goose as I pretend to be.

“I’m not a particularly good housekeeper yet, though, but I am trying hard to learn, and I mean to be an out-and-outer in time. We live in the funniest little house you ever saw, like a doll’s house. Do you know Clapham? Well, it is there, opposite a graveyard, so that nobody can look in upon us except ghosts, and I don’t believe in them since I am married. I did before a little, because we used to be told such horrible stories about them when we were in the nursery, to keep us quiet. Oh, that terrible bogey that comes down the chimney to carry off little girls who scream! I can see him now if I shut my eyes. Black with soot, great red eyes flaming fire, mouth as big as a shark’s and full of sharp teeth to eat up crying children with!

“In this dear little house, haunted by nothing but kind words and loving kisses, and they—don’t you think so?—ought to be strong enough to keep at bay a whole churchyard of bogies, Gerald and I and Margery live; a great deal happier than the

day is long, for when *it* is gone to bed our happiest time begins.

“Margery is our maid, the only one we have. I felt rather frightened when I first saw her, for she is half a head taller than I am, and her cheeks are redder than the red hood she wears. But she courtesies to me and calls me ‘ma’am,’ and, whatever she may feel like, doesn’t laugh *much* at my mistakes. A few days after Gerald brought me here, she asked me what she should cook for dinner. Now, I can eat a dinner when it is set before me, but have as much notion of ordering one as the man in the moon—though perhaps he always eats green cheese and don’t need notions.

“I was in the kitchen when she asked the question, and my eye fell upon some eggshells—the remnants of our breakfast.

“‘Would eggs?’ I said, blushing furiously.

“‘Oh, no, ma’am, not eggs,’ said Margery, with decision.

“‘Or—or cockles?’ I stammered, seizing the word from a man’s mouth who was crying them outside the window, and not in the least knowing what they were.

“‘Oh, dear no, ma’am,’ said Margery, more decisively still, ‘not cockles.’

“‘For myself, I should like nothing better than bread and butter,’ I said, in my desperation, feeling myself such a little duffer, and pretending that the tear in my eye was a cold. I really *tished*, Charley! Would you have believed me capable of it?

“‘Master likes fish,’ said Margery, looking things unutterable, while I tished again, and scrubbed my innocent nose till it was redder than my cheeks.

“I rapturously seized the straw she held out, and clung to it with the rapacity of despair. (Is rapacity right? It sounds romantic and novelish, yet somehow reminds me of pigs in a sty. Why, now?)

“‘Yes, to be sure, let’s have fish,’ I said.

“‘What fish?’ said Margery.

“The straw broke in my hand. I gasped for breath and implored memory to come and save me. Ha! *Turbot à la Hollandaise*. I remembered that.

“‘Turbot,’ I cried, triumphantly.

“Margery stared. ‘How much, ma’am?’ said she.

"Another poser. But necessity's the mother of—you know, don't you?"

"'Why, *three*, of course,' I said, firmly, though not quite so triumphantly: 'one for you, and one for me, and one for—'

"But I didn't finish, for Margery turned her back upon me and went into the scullery. There's just room for her there, without breaking *many* things, if she turns round gently.

"Since then Margery tells me what *she* would cook if *she* were missus, and we get on better.

"Goodness? That's Gerald's knock! and I always open the door to him myself, because Margery might think it improper if she saw—

"Gerald has been reading what I have written. I am *very* angry with him for doing it, but he says he is going to put his *veto* (I don't know what that means, but am sure it's something tyrannical, because he said it in such a masterful way) on my having any secrets from him whatsoever. He says, too, that if I ramble on like this I shall want a special messenger to carry you my epistle, for that it will be too heavy for him. He says that I must extract the *pith of the matter*—his own very words—and send you that, for that otherwise I shall weary you to death. But how am I to talk unless it is in my own language and in my own fashion? How is poor little Aileen to become all of a sudden as wise and matter-of-fact as he? But I will begin at the beginning, at any rate, and try to make it as short as I can.

"Soon after you went away, Charley, papa took it into his head that it was quite time that we three girls should be introduced a little into society.

"You may be sure we three girls had no objection to *that*, Charley. Society! Balls! Oh! I laugh now to think how my heart beat when I heard the words, and even Florry's fair face looked a trifle warmer. Florry is our beauty, you know.

"Papa actually went to London and brought us home some *lovely* necklaces and things, and mamma's jewel-box was ransacked, and there was some quarrelling among us as to which was to have which, till mamma said: 'Go and quarrel upstairs; do what you like there, but leave me in peace.' Charley, dear, did you ever dream of a mother who loved you?"

"Our old dancing-master from Cork came specially to drill us; and oh, how he did rap my toes! and when we'd learned how to waltz and galop and the rest of the fashionable dances, papa gave a ball—a real ball, Charley! He said it cost a mint of money, but he hoped 'twould be a good investment. He meant, I think, that he hoped Florry would get married, and Mabel, and perhaps I.

"There were lots of officers from Cork at the ball, Charley, and I heard them talking among themselves once, of papa, and Florry, and Mabel, and me. And they talked of us girls as if we were horses they had come to see trotted out before they bought them, and of papa as if—but oh, I won't say how they spoke of papa, not even to you!

"But I thought, as I sat in my corner hidden by a curtain, that at any rate Aileen wasn't a horse whom they might have if they would pay for it. And my cheeks burned with shame and with anger, and I had to bite my lip so hard, or I should have cried; and if I had, shouldn't I have caught it from papa!

"Oh, the conceited creatures with their small waists—Mabel says they wear stays—and their long moustaches, and their white hands, and their simpering smiles, and their rude laughs and jokes *aside*! Yet lots of girls colored up with pleasure when they asked them to dance, and seemed to think it the grandest thing in the world to be whirled round the room by a uniform. I used to think officers were *men*, Charley, who went out to fight our battles and to protect the country they loved. Now I think they are *uniforms*, stuffed; sillier than the silly girls who think it an honor to dance with them. 'But you won't, any one of you, get Aileen to dance with you,' I thought; and I shouldn't either, only none of them asked me.

"But the swell of the ball, Charley, was a *live lord*! Only think! Viscount Kilreeny, one of whose estates is within a drive of Ballyacora. I looked at him with awe, but he seemed like any other man, only rather worse; and simpered, and ate and drank—drank a *great deal*, and hiccuped after it—and laughed and joked *aside*, just like the officers. I was never so disappointed in my life. A *live lord*; and if I'd met him in the street I shouldn't even have looked at him.

"I must try and tell you what he's like, though, because he's got a lot to do with my story. He's a little taller than papa,

and has a pale yellow face, and a pale gray eye, and a mixy complexion, and a mouth that looks as if he'd just swallowed some vinegar and didn't want you to know it. And his hair is, oh, so black, with a greenish shade, and his teeth, oh, so white and a little too large for his mouth, and he wears an eyeglass in one eye, and has to make horrible faces to keep it in its place, and it tumbles down, notwithstanding, every other minute or two. I never talk to my Lord Viscount without counting the seconds till his eyeglass falls, and you wouldn't believe how nervous that makes you.

"I didn't dance much myself, so I had plenty of time for watching the others. Papa told me to keep in the background, because I mustn't stand in the way of my sisters. So I only danced the lancers with Harold Lanyon—my old chum, you know—and one galop with a stupid boy who trod on my dress, and the last waltz with—guess? Give it up? Why, with his lordship, Viscount Kilreeny.

"When he asked me I looked at papa, and papa nodded, but very angrily, and when the dance was over ordered me to bed with a look which seemed to promise '*a far from agreeable interview*'—that's what Mab calls 'em—for the next day in his study. But, goodness knows, *I* couldn't help it, and didn't enjoy it at all, for the noble lord's hair smelt of some nasty stuff that turned me sick.

"I heard two old dowagers say, as I passed them, that it was wonderful how genteel Miss Florence Smythe looked, *considering*. And that she was the belle of the room, and that it was no wonder that my Lord Kilreeny didn't take his glass off her. They said *eye*, but I say *glass*. I like to be accurate, and I saw it fall three times upon her bosom.

"Ethel—naughty girl!—was in her nightgown on the landing, dancing a *pas seul* to the music, her long black hair tumbling down over her, and her great dark eyes full of excitement. Oh, I did scold her! It was so nice to have somebody to scold, I was so cross. But the silly child actually cried, and then I had to tell her all about the stupid ball to comfort her. I wonder if papa ever felt sorry after having scolded *me*.

"But I got no scolding the next day; not an angry word. Papa was kind to all of us, and once patted Florry on the head. For a minute I really thought he was going to kiss her!!

"If I were to tell you everything, 'twould make a book. We had oceans of balls after that first one. Mr. Lanyon gave a ball. Viscount Kilreeny gave a ball. The officers at Cork gave a ball. And Florry was the belle at every one of them. Mabel's pale face was said to be *distingué*. And as for Aileen—I know what was said of her, and so shall Gerald, *every word of it*, if he ever forgets what is due to that fascinating creature.

"I don't know how Ethel got to know that the viscount was courting Florry. ('Courting' seems a vulgar word to use when you speak of a *live lord*, doesn't it? I suppose I should say, 'was honoring Florry with his attentions.') Every one seemed to know it after a bit, but Ethel guessed it first. And if she liked him, I was pleased enough, for now he came every day to ride with her, and I was allowed to ride too, as Mabel doesn't like it. What fun we had, Harold Lanyon and I, sometimes watching the noble lord *honoring Florry with his attentions*, and, when that became too slow, bounding off at a wild gallop, leaving them to follow at a decorous trot. Papa shouldn't have put me on a horse's back and let me taste liberty, if he intended to keep me in subjection.

"It was Harold Lanyon who first noticed the mischief my wildness was doing. 'He looks ten times as often at you, Aileen, as he does at your sister,' said he. 'By St. Patrick! I'll be sworn it's you the swell's in love with.' And then he put his hand on my hand, holding the whip, and said: 'If I wasn't as poor as a church-mouse, and forced to read, hang it! for Holy Orders, I'd let no man in the world squint love at *you*—that I wouldn't.' Poor old Hal! I'm almost as fond of him as I am of you, Charley dear.

"'Let's take the ditch,' I said, rather frightened—not at it, but at the eyeglass of the noble lord's. 'No,' said Harold. 'Yes,' said I. 'Give her her head,' shouted Harold, as my mare rose for it in answer to my whip; but the next moment I was in the ditch, covered with mud, dripping with dirty water, my foot twisted and sprained, and looking as little like a creature to fall in love with as ever naughty girl did in this world.

"'You deserve I don't know what,' said Harold, angrily, dismounting to pull me out again.

"'Well, at any rate,' I thought, as he wiped my streaming face with his handkerchief and shook me a little, 'there's one

good thing will come of it. No more aberrations (aberrations *is* the word, isn't it?) in the eye of the noble lord. He'll think of me now as a wild schoolgirl who ought to be whipped and sent to bed.' And then Harold gave me another shake, and blushed as red as I did, when the two hove in view, at the pickle we were in.

"Florry looks beautiful on horseback, Charley. Let me out with it and have done with it, for in my heart I don't admire Florry at all. Her figure is exquisite, her complexion like pure white velvet tinged with pink, her eyes such a deep, dark blue, the knot of her silky black hair behind absolute perfection. These pretty words are Harold's, not mine. I asked him what he thought of Florry, and he said all that; and then he added—but, never mind!

"‘Oh, *Aileen!*’ she said, as she rode up to the ditch.

"‘Bless my—er—er—soul!’ said the noble viscount, as if he wasn't quite clear whether he'd got one.

"What could I do but hang my head, and blush, and wish I were dead, Charley? I was always the pickle of the nursery, and the times I've wished I were dead, in corners and dark closets, you wouldn't believe, for fear of the bogey. The bogey I feared now was papa, and I wondered if the viscount would tell him. And then Harold lifted me up on my horse and rode home with me, very gloomily, to the time of the ‘Dead March in Saul.’

"When I was a little girl, Charley, and began to learn music and didn't—neither do I now—like practising scales and five-finger exercises, I set my wicked little brains to work to find a plan to escape them. I dipped my head, long hair and all, into a basin of cold water, and dried it out of an open window through which came a cutting east wind. I remember now the feeling of fearful delight with which I went to bed, expecting to get up in the morning with such a sore throat as never was. But I slept like a top, and woke in the morning feeling as well as a cricket. And, oh, the scales I had to practise that day! Do you see the meaning? Silly old boy! men *are* so slow at seeing meanings. If you try not to do anything you are all the more certain to have to do it.

"Margery has come to lay the cloth for dinner, and that is—yes, it *is*—Gerald's foot upon the pavement. Good-bye; you

are nothing now that he is there—my husband—my husband—who is all the world to me!

“Gerald has gone again—back to that Moloch of a business (I know Moloch is right, because I asked Gerald), and won’t be back for ever so long. Yet, if he didn’t go he wouldn’t come; and, oh, the coming—the coming!

“I’ve helped Margery wash up the breakfast things (I only broke *one* cup); told her what to cook for dinner, though I know she won’t cook it; watered my flowers—two buds on the chrysanthemum, which Gerald thinks *may* come to blossom; fed my canaries, they’re just like us—so fond of one another; dusted my drawing-room—such a mite of a room!—mended my pen, and begun again. I dare say you won’t read half of what I’m writing, but I’m so full of it, it *will* come out. And I’ve nobody to talk to but Margery, and that would be *intra digg*, wouldn’t it? That’s *Latin*: ah! you don’t know how clever I’m getting!

“Yes, there *is* some one else to talk to. Some one who knows you, too. Would you like to know who it is? That’s a secret, and I *can* keep secrets, you shall see.

“I was telling you about Florry and Florry’s noble lover. But I must go back a bit first, and tell you about some one else and how we got to know—never mind yet whether ’tis a him or a her.

“One day Viscount Kilreeny, turning over a portfolio, came across a wretched little sketch of Florry’s, and said she ought to learn how to draw. Papa always echoes everything the viscount says, so papa said she ought to learn to draw, too. ‘I’ve got a young-er-fellah down from er-London,’ says the viscount, ‘to make some alterations in-er Kilreeny Castle. He teaches er-drawing.’

“‘Send him to Ballyacora,’ says papa.

“So he came. And now I suppose you’ve guessed that it’s a he. But, never mind, you’d have to know some time.

“We were all out when he came, except papa, who engaged him on the spot to come and give us lessons three times a week. ‘He seems a decent sort of fellow,’ said papa, ‘and to know his place.’

“I saw his card lying on papa’s study-table, and took it up and read it. ‘Gerald Malcolmson, Architect.’ That was what

the card said ; nothing more, Charley. Not a word of all the pain and hope and fear and joy.

"I carried the card into the schoolroom and showed it to Mabel. 'A pretty name, isn't it?' I said, and then I laughed, and added: 'Perhaps he'll fall in love with one of us. What a joke if he does! Wouldn't papa be fit to kill the one, eh, Mab?'

"'Twould be a joke which *the one* wouldn't see, I fancy,' said Mabel, severely; 'there'd be more crying than laughing about that joke, and I hope it won't be me.'

"'You! No, Mab, I don't think it will be you,' I answered; 'it will be me. I dreamed last night of a burial, and saw three black crows this morning. I wonder whether papa will beat me to death or lock me up in the cellar.' And then I danced away laughing, for I saw by the backward turn of Ethel's head that the chit was listening.

"But when he really came, and I saw him standing by the side of papa—the one short, stout, bald, pompous; the other tall, grave, gentlemanly—oh, Charley, how is a woman to describe the man whom she loves?

"Not that I fell in love with him there and then. It wasn't love, but shame, which made my heart beat so quickly and so out of time, and made me hang my head, and sent the red blood to my cheek. For when I saw him, so different from what I had fancied, I was so ashamed of what I had said to Mabel that I would have liked to run away and hide myself.

"I fancy I can see us all again, just as if somebody had painted a picture in my head: he, looking so much more of a gentleman than papa, although he only wore a short shooting-coat, as simple as possible; Ethel staring at him with wide-open black eyes; Miss Whitfield, the present 'young person' who teaches us, trembling at sight of papa; Mabel smiling her queer, sarcastic smile; Florry looking as unmoved as a duchess; and I myself blushing like a goose—I didn't see myself though, *of course*, only *felt* what an idiot I was looking.

"'These are my daughters,' said papa, introducing us, 'and this,' with a nod to Miss Whitfield, who looked as if it were a blow, 'is my daughters' governess. Florence, show your drawings to Mr. Malcolmson. Ethel, if you can't behave better than that I'll send you out of the room. His lordship thinks that Miss Smythe has undoubted talent.'

"Mr. Malcolmson looked at the drawings, but said not a word. Mabel smiled that sour smile of hers. There was a dead silence.

" 'Well, I'll leave them to you,' said papa, who doesn't know a stick from a stone in a drawing, and was glad to get away. And then our new master put aside all Florry's crooked cottages and tumble-down trees, and gave her a clean piece of paper and a sharpened pencil, and set her a few straight strokes for a copy. It was always best, he said, to begin at the beginning. All this while he never looked at Florry, which I thought strange. All men looked at Florry, who, till you're tired of a face that never changes, is a great deal better worth looking at than her drawings.

"Oh, how my hand aches! I'll rest now and begin again in the evening.

"I'm going to begin with a confession, Charley. I've been a bad girl; I know I have. But it's like this: when we get a new teacher, I always try—something makes me try—whether he or she, or I am the stronger. If I am, woe betide the stranger! If he or she is, I submit. And very soon I began to try my hand on Mr. Malcolmson, and found my master in him.

"Never was so proper a young man, I should think. *He* make love to us? Very, very soon we had to make love to him, or, rather, mind our P's and Q's when *he* was teaching. Even saucy Ethel only tried disobedience once. She began to chatter, and was told to be quiet. Her great black eyes flashed, and she talked the harder. And then without a word—without force—I don't know how—she was packed out of the room, at liberty to talk on the other side of the door. I looked at Mabel's twitching mouth, my own twitching, but was called to order by a stern inquiry as to whether I thought trees grew like that in nature.

" 'Twas no use to snub Mr. Malcolmson—he wouldn't be snubbed; 'twas no use trying to disobey him, so I obeyed. And soon I began to do more—I began to try to please him.

" 'He'll be sending Florry out of the room next,' grumbled Mabel, when he was gone.

" 'If he does, she'll have to go,' I answered, shortly.

" 'Or boxing your ears by way of a change. It looks a deal more likely than falling in love with you.'

"I don't know why those words of Mabel should have made

me so miserable, for I had noticed something. I noticed that, though he seldom praised the others, he never praised me; though he always spoke gravely to them, he sometimes spoke sharply to me; and, even when I tried my best to please him, he always showed me what I might have done, instead of being pleased with what I had.

"The next lesson, I brought him a drawing I had done alone, and done well, I thought. I had taken a great deal of trouble with it, and I gave it to him, smiling, thinking he would be sure to praise me. He gave a little start when I put it into his hand, and looked at me with such an odd look: not pleased, but full of trouble. Then he said, sternly:

" 'I do not wish you to draw alone. You will do yourself more harm than good by attempting it. The perspective of this drawing is quite false.'

"Charley, I cannot tell you how I felt, but I said to myself: 'I have tried to please him and I cannot. I will try no more.'

"He got a fresh bit of paper, and prepared it for me, and put the pencil into my hand. Our fingers touched as he did it, and a great pain seemed to run into my body from the touch. But he should not make me cry. I would die first.

" 'Begin,' he said.

"But I dashed the pencil down, and looked at him, and said: 'I will never draw again. I have deserved praise, and you treat me as if I deserved punishment.'

"Then I ran out of the room and into the library, and locked the door, and flung myself upon a sofa, and covered my mouth to keep myself from screaming; and I lay there till the clock struck four, and he came out.

"And when he came out I forgot my anger in the terror lest he should go away angry, and I should never see him again.

"You know how high the library window is. No matter, I jumped out of it on to the gravel, and ran in among the shrubs down to the avenue leading to the north lodge, for I knew he always went back to Kilreeny Castle that way. And what I was going to say to him I didn't know the least bit, only I couldn't bear that he should go away hating me.

" 'Twas only when I heard his step coming down the avenue that I began to feel wonder as to what I should say to him, and every moment I thought about it I grew hotter, till at last, when

I saw him through the tree branches, I could think of nothing but how I should escape again; and I began to run back faster than I had come.

“But in running I caught my foot in the root of a tree and fell, and in another moment he had broken through the shrubs and was kneeling beside me.

“Oh, I had hurt myself very much, I knew, for when I tried to move I could not help groaning. And when I groaned, he groaned too, and looked at me with *such* a look. He was not going away hating me, Charley. I knew that then.

“His touch—so unlike anybody else’s touch, Charley—kept me from fainting for a minute, and then the sky turned black, and I thought I was dying; and I wasn’t sorry to die either. Doesn’t that sound like something out of one of mamma’s *three*? I am laughing while I cry over it, yet I am crying most. That smudge is a tear; don’t mind it.

“I’ll run and fetch my vinaigrette and bathe my eyes with cold water, for it’s near Gerald’s time for coming; and if he finds me with red eyes he’ll put his *veto*, or something, on my finishing what I’ve got to say. And the most delicious bit of it, and the most fearfully awful, is coming—in the third volume, you know, as all the tit-bits always do.

“There now, I’ve *emerged from the romantic*—isn’t that grand?—by pretending to scold Margery, and am quite myself again. And now I can go back to lying on the wet grass, with Gerald kneeling beside me making it all the wetter with his tears, without being *too* sentimental. By-the-bye, Gerald declares he didn’t cry, and doesn’t know how to. ‘Tell your grandmother,’ I say; ‘I *felt* them’—meaning the tears—‘warm upon my face.’

“Anyhow, when I came to myself he had got his arm under my head, and was asking me, in a voice as gentle as it used to be stern, if I were better, and if I could move without pain.

“I tried to move, ashamed of having forgotten how odd it would look if anybody came and found us, but the trying made me groan again.

“‘Where is it?’ he said, in the old sharp way, putting his lips together hard; but I wasn’t afraid of him now—not a morsel. Or, only afraid in a new way—afraid of hurting him, Charley, not of his hurting me.

“‘In my left shoulder,’ I answered, trying to smile; ’twas hard work though.

“‘You must let me look,’ he said, and now he spoke in the old masterful way. ‘I’m a sort of Jack-of-all-trades, and know a little of everything. You won’t mind much, will you? There’s no one else. I’ve been to the lodge already, and it’s too far back to the house.’

“‘You will do what is right,’ I said.

“It was he who smiled now, though his lip was trembling, and I wouldn’t have let him see how frightened I was for the world, when he pulled out a knife. But I shut my eyes when he began to use it, though it was only to cut open my dress at the shoulder, leaving it and my left arm bare.

“‘Ah, I see what it is,’ he said. ‘Now, Miss Aileen, I am going to hurt you, but you will be a good girl and forgive me. Scream as loud as you like; there’s nobody here to hear you but me and the birds.’

“And I did scream, Charley, sure enough, as loud as he could wish, when, with a sharp, clicking sound, he pulled my arm into its place again. Then the sky turned black once more, and I couldn’t see him, only hear his voice.

“‘Thank God that it is over,’ he said. Then, quite sternly, ‘Miss Aileen, you are not to faint again. I won’t allow it.’

“But I had to go, even though I tried to obey him. I could not help myself, and it was a few minutes before I could open my eyes, or knew where I was. Then I saw that he, too, was as white as a sheet, and that his forehead was wet with drops of perspiration.

“‘How can I ever thank you?’ I said, ‘and after I had been so naughty!’

“‘Yes,’ he said, ‘you were naughty;’ and, Charley, he may take his affidavit on his word and honor, but I’m *sure* there *was* a tear in his eye, and I think *two*, but perhaps my faintness may have made me see double.

“‘But I have been punished,’ I said, beginning to cry myself, ‘you don’t know how severely.’

“‘And punishment is a very good thing for most of us,’ he answered.

“But, now that he began to be so masterful, I grew a little angry, and remembered how unjust he had been.

“‘You were unkind to me, though,’ I said. And I felt it

so particularly hard that *he* should have been unkind to me that I began to sob.

"But he did not say a word to comfort me; he looked exactly now his old self again, and his forehead was lined, and his mouth firm and straight, and the tear was dried up in his eyes, and his whole manner hard, and he said, sharply:

" 'Miss Aileen, it is time I carried you up to the house.'

" 'Oh, I can walk.'

" 'I think not. At any rate I shall not let you.'

" 'Mr. Malcolmson!'

" 'Miss Aileen!'

"But I forgot to be angry any more when he lifted me, and my heavy head sought his shoulder as if it were its natural resting-place. Yet we never, either of us, spoke another word till he put me down in the hall.

"I have been crying again, and why, I do not know. To-morrow I will take a fresh sheet and try and finish. To-day I cannot, somehow."

CHAPTER XXVII.

A LIVE LORD.

"Ja! Lieb' ist höher Leben im Gemeinen."

(Yes! Love is higher life in commonplace.)

UHLAND.

"WHAT a heap I have written, to be sure, and yet I've almost as much more to tell you. Have you got a waste-paper basket over there in Switzerland; and will this be thrown into it, I wonder?

"Never mind. I'm doing what Gerald told me to do, anyhow, and that's one comfort; and I've found some one it isn't *intra digg* to tell it to, and that's another comfort, and *Latin* into the bargain.

"Well, Gerald put me down in the hall, and the footman stared as if he'd stare his eyes out, till Mr. Malcolmson sent him off to fetch Mab. And when Mab came *she* stared just as much, only her eyes aren't quite as round as his.

“*Wasn't* it clever of Gerald to send for Mab instead of Florry?

“But Mab's staring didn't last long; and a new look came into her eyes which made me blush as red as a lobster, and then she turned her back on Mr. Malcolmson in her quick way, and told John to carry me up into my room, and came herself and sat down beside the bed, and looked at me again.

“‘Here's a pretty kettle of fish,’ said she.

“I put my arms round her neck and drew her head down to mine upon the pillow, and cried until her hair was wet and her collar dabbled, and I could cry no more. And she let me do it, too, and never said another word until I stopped.

“‘Oh, Mabel dear, help me!’ I said.

“‘I'd far better whip you,’ she answered, smoothing her hair—she cannot bear it rough; ‘but I suppose I must do worse than that—tell papa.’

“‘Mabel, you are cruel.’

“‘Would it be kind to let you stay in your fool's paradise till you have eaten the apple? But I'm afraid you have eaten it already.’

“‘Oh, I'm so miserable,’ I sobbed; ‘I wish I were dead.’

“‘Of course you are. That's the consequence of sucking poison. It's sweet in the mouth, Aileen, but bitter in the stomach. As for that parson-looking young architect, who you'd have thought was as proper and pious as a dean of eighty, I've a great mind to send John after him with a horsewhip.’

“‘Mabel, he never said a word to me. Could he help my falling? Was it not kind of him to pick me up?’

“‘He can help looking at you like that, I suppose, the goose! I thought he had some sense before, but find he's as silly as the rest of them.’

“‘How did he look, Mab?’ I cried, eagerly.

“‘Oh, don't think *I'm* going to give you any more of the sweet, poisonous stuff. I'm racking my brains to find an emetic. Ha, I have it! You'll go to Corvanny House to-day on your long-promised visit to Alice Lanyon.’

“‘Go to Corvanny House!’

“‘Yes. I'll drive you over myself in the phaeton. Your shoulder's a little stiff, I dare say, but never mind that. You deserve to be hurt a little.’

“‘*Go to Corvanny House!*’

“‘Lie down, Aileen, this moment. What do you mean by frightening me like that? Would you rather I told papa? And when you are there, I’ll drop Mr. Malcolmson a line, and request him to find some excuse for not coming again. I think he’ll have the gumption to understand me.’

“‘What do you mean, Mabel? Do you mean, never to see—’

“‘Break your descent from heaven to earth by a little mid-air flirtation with Harold Lanyon. He’ll be delighted to support you in the clouds.’

“‘I will *not* go to Corvanny.’

“‘You don’t like my emetic? But it is answering its purpose. You are turning sick already.’

“Oh, Charley, Charley, the thought of that terrible moment turns me sick again, and faint, and fit to die. Every drop of blood in my body rebelled against *this* cure.

“‘Let me help you to dress, Aileen. Drink the cup to the dregs.’

“‘I will not drink; it is killing me.’

“‘Nonsense, it is curing. You will—’

“‘I will *not*. I will *not*. Take away your loathsome cup from my lips.’

“‘Empty it first.’

“‘Not if you kill me. Not if you tell papa.’

“‘Hoity-toity! Hear how this helpless girl defies the universe! But disgrace and shame are strong motives, Aileen.’

“‘Yes, Mabel, but there is something stronger.’

“‘Very well. Stay at home, and let papa take you in hand. I hear his boots creaking on the gravel.’

“I heard them, too, Charley, and fell back upon my pillow, sobbing again, for I was afraid; oh, I was afraid!

“‘Take a little time to think about it,’ said Mabel, and she spoke in a kinder voice. ‘To-morrow you will be stronger in mind and body, and will give me your hand, I hope, and let me lead you out of your Garden of Eden. Child, do you think you would be happy if you married a poor man like that? Men are cruel, Aileen—take from a woman all she has to give and then forget the sacrifice; and he is no exception to the rule, believe me.’

“I only half listened to what Mabel said, for, though I don’t know why, I’m sure, that word *married* took all the romance

out of me. Marriage! I had only thought of love, or, rather, thought of nothing except that to touch him—to be near him—seemed the only thing worth living for. Marriage! Why he had never asked me, or kissed me, or touched me, but when he must. He was my master. I had been naughty, and, because I had been punished for it, he had forgiven me. And now it was not Mabel, but something else, which drove me out of the Garden of Eden.

“I’m only a silly little thing, Charley, and not full of wise thoughts like Gerald and you, but I saw the flaming sword and *felt* it. And I cried no more; for crying comes when you are hurt a little, not when your heart is pierced through and through.

“Mabel went away and left me to sleep, as she said; but I did not sleep; how could I? how could I?

“Are you getting tired, Charley? Does this commonplace love of silly little Aileen’s seem ridiculous when you think of the duke’s daughter whom *you* are going to marry? Oh, dear! maybe it’s like the fable in that absurd Æsop about the boys and the frogs—only fun to you, while it was almost death to me!

“I was very poorly for a day or two, but nobody seemed to mind it much, except Mabel, who nursed and scolded me, and—who else do you think? Give it up? The noble viscount. He sent every day to inquire. I thought I had done him a wrong, and that he wasn’t so disagreeable as he looked, but I never thought—oh, me, again! why do things go so contrary in this queer world!—everything higgledy-piggledy, and upside down, and inside out.

“I had been sitting at my bedroom window looking down the carriage drive and watching *him*—not the viscount, Charley—come slowly up it. I thought perhaps he would look up—I was so afraid that he might look up that I hid myself behind a curtain. If he had I should have been angry, because papa might have been looking out, too, and seen him, but when he didn’t, not even lift his head for a moment—he might have pretended to be looking at the sky, you know—I was so much more angry that I cried out loudly that I hated him, and then, frightened at the lie I was telling, covered my face with both my hands and burst out a-sobbing.

“‘Miss Aileen, you are wanted in the study.’

“Good gracious, Charley, what a turn it did give me, to be

sure! I had felt so angry with him that I had been thinking how I could hurt him most, and had wondered whether if I died he would be sorry, and whether the chemist in the village sold poison. I should be afraid to drown myself in the pond down by the lodge, for there were ghosts there, I knew. And yet I thought he could hardly help crying a little, if he saw me floating there with golden hair—that's another rhyme—and a white paper pinned to the bosom of my frock to say that if he'd looked up I shouldn't have done it. And I was so full of this that I went and lay down upon the floor, and lay quite straight as dead people do in coffins, and crossed my hands upon my breast, and shut my eyes, and made believe that I was really dead, and that he was looking at me, and so sorry that he hadn't looked up. And you can't think how it comforted me!

"And it was just then that James knocked at the door and said, 'Miss Aileen, you are wanted in the study.'

"You should have seen how quickly I came back to life at hearing these words. It is so much more romantic to die than to be scolded by papa. And, of course, that's what I was wanted for. So I had to brush my hair, and sponge my eyes with a little of Rimmel's Aromatic, you know, and run down-stairs as fast as I could. And I got to the study door breathless, and burst it open in the way for which I am always being scolded. Then I stood still, and waited to hear what papa had to say to me.

"He began in an odd way. He began with an 'ahem!' Now, you know, or perhaps you *don't* know, that papa usually begins with a stronger word than that when he scolds us girls. And it wasn't 'ahem' either; it was 'er—er—hem!' so I looked up in amaze, and met a fishy gleam shining through a glass covering. And I knew it was his lordship, Viscount Kilreeny.

"'Oh, I beg your pardon,' I said, blushing furiously. (And while I think of it, Charley, *couldn't* you bring me home some cure for blushing? It *does* look so *very ridiculous* to see an old married woman in a low dress—not that I wear *them* much now—blushing all over her neck and arms. The more I try not to, the more I do it. I've tried saying, 'It will all be the same in a hundred years,' and it doesn't help me a bit. I wonder if *leeches* would—what do you think?)

"'Not at all,' said his lordship.

“‘I think papa wants me,’ I said.

“‘Not at all,’ said his lordship again. ‘To tell the—er—truth’ (and I shouldn’t think he tells it very often, Charley, he bungled so over it), ‘it was I that wanted you, not your papa.’

“‘What do you want me for?’ I said, and I suppose it was rude to say it to a *live lord*, but he *did* look such a duffer.

“‘My—I mean—Miss Aileen, you are a—er—doos—er—uncommon clever girl; answer the question yourself.’

“‘I wouldn’t have asked it if I could have answered it, my lord,’ I said pertly.

“‘Doos—er—*uncommon* clever,’ he repeated. ‘Pray sit down, my—Miss Aileen, and let *me*—er—stand.’

“‘What!’ I said. ‘*I* sit, and you a *live*—’ But I didn’t finish, Charley. I nearly burst out laughing, though, and had to pretend to use my pocket-handkerchief, and even then almost betrayed myself.

“‘My—Miss Aileen,’ he said, getting up and taking my hand—and, oh, Charley, the horrid creature actually *pressed* it—‘there are some questions—er—doosedly unpleasant for a fellah to put.’

“‘Then don’t put them, my lord,’ I said. And then I used my handkerchief again, and said to myself ten times over, ‘It will all be the same in a hundred years; it will all be the same in a hundred years.’ But I knew, for all my saying it, that I was crimson.

“‘No,’ he said, brightening and letting his eyeglass fall upon my shoulder, ‘I—I—won’t. Mutual understanding so much more—er—agreeable.’ And then, oh, Charley! he stooped his greenish-black head and tried to—to—

“‘If you can’t guess what he tried to, never mind. I don’t think he thought before that Aileen had such a temper.

“‘For—for shame, my lord,’ I said. ‘I—I am not Florry. But I am her sister,’ I added, with a burst of rage. ‘I am her sister, my lord.’

“‘I never thought you were an iceberg,’ he said, more eagerly than I ever heard him speak before. ‘Handsome girl, your sister, very—but a fellah likes warmth.’

“‘If he wants warmth, he shall have plenty of it, I thought, soon, and indeed I was like a furnace already. And then I tried to restrain myself, and to be dignified, and to look like a heroine.

“‘But, Charley, I can’t play the heroine for the life of me.

If I toss my head, my curls come tumbling down. If I try to curl my lips, they only pout; my neck isn't long enough for arching, and there's an absurd dimple in my cheek that makes me look like a baby. If I frown at Harold Lanyon, he only laughs and says:

"‘Go it, Aileen; you do look jolly when you do that.’ And he's a sort of a make-believe lover, you know. Other men give me their hand instead of their arm when they want to help me over stiles and things, and treat me as if I were in short frocks. That is to say, did treat me—they can't now, you know.

"‘So I dare say I only looked like a little idiot instead of looking dignified, and the noble lord went on unabashed:

"‘Miss—may I say Aileen? I felt that it was you cut out for me by what you may call—er—fate, the very first time I danced with you. When your curls tickled my cheek—er—I felt that you were born to be a viscountess.’

"‘I'll go straight up-stairs and cut off my curls,’ I said, ‘or I would, but for papa. Would you accept them as a keepsake, my lord?’

"‘I'd a great deal rather you kept them on your pretty head, my—Miss Aileen—because I want the—er—head too.’

"‘Do you want me to cut off my head?’

"‘Not exactly. He—he! sharp that—very! The curls began it, and the leap—uncommonly plucky thing for a girl to do—finished it. In fact—er—floored me.’

"‘What *do* you mean, my lord!’

"‘That a girl who can rise to a ditch like that is worthy of *any* station. You've got wealth, beauty, pluck, and by—er—Jove, I'll make you into a—er—viscountess.’

"‘Are you asking me to be your wife?’

"‘Yes,’ he answered, ‘I am. Why shilly-shally about it?’

"‘I didn't try to be a heroine any more. I only said, ‘No, no, no, a thousand times,’ and bolted—I mean, of course, *ran*—to the door.

"‘But his lordship—I didn't think it had been in him—was quicker than I, and held me back.

"‘Let me go,’ I panted.

"‘Your father says yes, Aileen.’

"‘I will not speak another word until you open the door.’

"‘But a lady's “no.”’ And now he fell upon his knees—

to me—a live lord! There's that comfort, I've had a live lord upon his knees before me, and it's worth going through something for *that*, isn't it? When Gerald vexes me, I'll remind him of it.

“Nevertheless, somehow I got away, and ran up-stairs to my bedroom and locked myself in, and cried till my head ached. Everything seemed going wrong with me. And I was sitting there in the twilight, and thinking of the pool again, when there was another rap at the door—a sharp rap, and one I was forced to answer. Mabel had knocked before with my tea, but I wouldn't let her in.

“What papa had to say to me I'll tell you another time, for I must stop writing to-day. I'm tired and have other things to do.

“I begin to think I could write a *splendid* novel if I tried, and read up some long words for it. My story doesn't sound as well as it would if there were longer words. Now there's *parallelogram*—*that* sounds romantic. But I can't make it fit in. And there's *archaiologick* (I've just looked it out in Walker)—*that* sounds bewildering, but then it means ‘relating to antiquities’—another stunner—and though Gerald and I are quite old married people *now*, we weren't *then*, and so it wouldn't suit.

“Neither would *delirium tremens*. (I've asked Gerald how to spell *that*.) It's what your Patsey, you know, that you used to lick—I mean, of course, *correct*—has sometimes, and is sure to die of, so the doctor says; and when he has it, he raves and rants and rushes about like a madman. But if I wrote, ‘Papa rushed towards me in a *delirium tremens*,’ you might not know that I meant ‘Came in in a fury.’

“Which reminds me of Margery. She wrote a letter to her love the other day, and told him he might come on Monday evening at ‘zackly’ half-past seven. She showed the letter to Gerald, and he suggested she should put *exactly* for ‘zackly.’ ‘Well, sir,’ said Margery, “‘eggs ackler’ is nice words, but I'm afraid *he* wouldn't understand 'em.’ And that's the way with me; if I were to have written, ‘The noble lord described a parallelogram,’ you'd never guess, would you, that a live lord had been down upon his knees before me?

“To go back to papa. It *was* a fury he was in, and oh, how I trembled! And when he said, ‘Now, miss, what's the meaning

of this (and then he used such a bad word, Charley) nonsense? I wished I hadn't put off going to the pool, and would rather far have been floating upon it—a ghastly corpse (doesn't *ghastly corpse* sound goose-fleshy?)—than sitting facing him.

“‘Answer me,’ said papa.

“‘I don't like him,’ I said.

“‘*Like him!* What's that got to do with it? I like him,’ said papa.

“What could I do but cry, Charley? So I cried and cried and cried.

“‘Now just you look here,’ said papa. ‘He's coming again to-morrow, and to-morrow you'll say yes. It's a (and here he used that wicked word again) nuisance that it isn't Florry he wants, but no matter. There'll be one of you off my hands, at all events. To-morrow you'll say yes.’

“‘I can't say yes, papa.’ And then I took his hand and put it to my lips, and said, sobbing, ‘Dear papa, isn't it a dreadful thing for a wife not to love her husband, and perhaps—who knows?—to love some one else?’

“He tried to take away his hand, but I went on:

“‘Dear papa, I am only a foolish girl and know very little, but I can fancy I should want to kill myself if I were forced to marry a man whom I could not bear to touch or look at—whom I could not honor, papa, as well as obey. I fancy I should die, or grow hard and cold and cruel, and hating him first, hate everybody afterwards. Dear papa, would not you, too?’

“He got away his hand then, Charley, and looked at me with such a look, and his red face turned gray, and he seemed to gasp, as if I had struck him. I went on—something inside me seemed to put words into my mouth:

“‘Oh, papa, you would not condemn me to that, would you?—your poor little Aileen. For, papa, you were young once, and loved some one, maybe, and mamma was young, and—’

“But I could not go on with that, Charley—*that* seemed so impossible.

“For a moment I thought I had conquered. His face worked, his eyes grew dim, his breath came short and quick. Then the color came back to his face, and he pushed away my hand—I had put it on his knee—and he grasped my shoulder—grasped it so hard that I nearly cried out loud with the pain.

“‘Look here, no more of that,’ he said, using some dreadful words again. ‘It’s a daughter’s duty to obey her father, and it’s a father’s duty to make her if she won’t. You’ll say yes to-morrow, or I’ll know the reason why.’”

“I did not answer him.

“‘Speak,’ he said, shaking me.

“‘I will not tell you a lie, papa. I cannot marry the viscount.’”

“Oh, Charley, how can I tell you? It seems almost too dreadful to write. With his other hand he struck me—struck me on my head with such force that I turned faint and all but fell. And I was so frightened that for a second—only for a second—I nearly gave way, nearly promised to do what he bade me.

“But he did not strike again, or even try to find out what effect his blow had had upon me. He might have been the one struck himself, for he let me loose instantly, and put up both his hands to his head, and stood looking at me as if I were a ghost. And then without a word he went to the door and opened it and went out.

“But he locked the door after him and left me alone—a prisoner.

“No one came near me all the rest of the day, and I began to feel something of the pain of starvation, for I had had nothing to eat since the morning. The sun sank, and the shadows in the room seemed to turn to living things and to move towards me slowly, like stealthy murderers. At last I saw even them no more, and saw nothing. And I thought I was really dead, and that some one—my Gerald—was crying over me.

“And his tears fell so cold upon my face, that, with a great effort, I said:

“‘Don’t cry; it hurts me.’”

“‘Thank God!’ cried an eager voice, but it was not Gerald’s; it was Mabel’s. And I could see her now, bending over me.

“‘Aileen, Aileen, my darling,’ she said, ‘are you better?’”

“‘Mabel, is it really you, or am I dreaming?’”

“‘It is really me. Here is some breakfast, Aileen. Try to eat it.’”

“‘I think I had better die, Mabel. Papa struck me.’”

“‘I know,’ she said, setting her teeth. ‘Never mind, dear. I will help you now. I will help you *now*.’”

“‘What do you mean?’”

“‘That with the blow, Aileen, he struck something else besides you, and struck it dead.’

“‘What, Mabel? You look fierce and angry. You frighten me.’

“‘My sense of duty to him, Aileen—my hesitation to help you. Eat, my darling; eat and live, and be happy.’

“But she was forced to feed me after all, a spoonful at a time. And when I had eaten as much as I could, she undressed me and put me to bed. I had not been in bed, but had been lying on the floor all the night.

“‘Now, there you stay for the next fortnight,’ she said; ‘the doctor is coming.’

“‘But I am not ill.’

“‘You’ll have to be ill to save my reputation.’

“‘Mabel, why do you always talk in riddles?’

“‘To conform with everything else in the world. All our life’s a riddle, and I’ve given up trying to guess it.’

“‘Why a riddle, Mab?’

“‘You are a riddle, first of all. You might marry a viscount, and prefer to marry a poor architect.’

“‘Marry? Oh, Mabel, Mabel dear!’

“‘Don’t begin to cry again, Aileen. Papa’s another riddle—might be respected by his children, and prefers to be despised.’

“‘Ah, Mab, you always laugh at everything, and yet your laughter is bitterer than my tears!’

“‘Mamma’s the third—might love and be loved, and prefers to feel the emotion through the medium of a novel.’

“‘How clever you are, Mab! Where do you get the long words from?’

“‘And I’m the biggest and most incomprehensible riddle of all—might run away, and don’t.’

“‘Well, dear, what next?’ I asked, for she sat upon my bed, silent, her lips pressed hard upon each other, her broad forehead frowning.

“‘Eat and drink,’ she answered, ‘for to-morrow we die.’

“‘Mab, I love you better than any one else in the world, except Charley, and—and—and—but sometimes I feel more afraid of you even than I am of papa.’

“‘It’s papa that’s getting punished to-day,’ she said, smiling.

‘I’ve told him that you are dying of hunger, and he’s in what Charley would call a desperate funk.’

“‘Oh, Mab, but it was not true.’

“‘Very well, then marry the viscount.’

“‘Oh, Mab, dear, help me!’

“‘Just what I’m going to do, if you’ll be a good girl and do what I tell you.’

“‘I’ll do anything, Mab.’

“‘First answer me this, though—and now, Aileen, I want the truth. You needn’t try pretence with me. Do you *love* Mr. Malcolmson?’

“But how could I answer her, Charley—how could I? I only burst out sobbing again, and hid my burning face in her bosom. And she kissed me, and said:

“‘Never mind, dear, I know now. And here is something for you. I’ve had it in my pocket a week; and all the week, till yesterday, I was debating whether I ought not to give it to papa. Read it, and be happy.’

“Then I suppose she went, Charley, for when I thought about her again she was gone. But I didn’t think about her for a long, long time, for the letter was from *him*, and I was drinking of a cup so sweet, so sweet! Do you know the taste, Charley? Do you think the duke’s daughter will mix such a draught for you?

“The viscount came and the viscount went, but *I* never said yes to him. He’s engaged to Florry now, and will be our brother-in-law before Christmas. And I was ill for a fortnight, and the doctor came and looked at my tongue, and felt my pulse, and shook his head over the puzzling case, and sent me medicine—oceans of it—but his medicine didn’t do me the least good in the world. Physic won’t cure love, will it?

“And Mabel nursed me all the time, and brought me love-potions, and at the end of the fortnight she and I got up one morning with the cock-crow, and went out together into the park through a window, with the dew thick upon the ground, and the deer looking at us with wide eyes of sympathy.

“A little way from the lodge there was a carriage waiting, and a lady in it—an old lady with the sweetest face you ever saw—who took me to her bosom, and cried over me, and kissed me a thousand times, as if she had been my mother.

"Mab never left me—good, kind Mab!—until I was in this lady's arms, and then she stood upon the carriage step to kiss me and say good-bye, adding:

"What a wonderful riddle you are, Aileen, to want to marry a poor architect, when you might have been a viscountess! I give you up; and what a still more wonderful riddle am I—to be able to run away, and not to do it! But I gave myself up long ago.'

"Before I could speak for crying she was gone, her dark dress soon lost sight of among the trees, and we were dashing down the rutty road as fast as the horses could take us.

"Two days afterwards I was married in London by special leave of that darling old archbishop, who must know, I think, what true love means—perhaps Gerald told him—and feel sorry for poor girls whose parents are hard upon them. And I hope he's got a good wife of his own, and daughters to stroke his dear old face and pat his kind old cheeks. I asked Gerald the other day to let me work him a pair of slippers or something just to show my gratitude, but he only laughed and wouldn't let me.

"And this is all, Charley. Or, not all; but if you want to know the rest, you must come to Clapham to hear it. And you needn't be afraid of ghosts from the churchyard opposite, for Margery has hung an old horseshoe inside the house door, and she says it would be a bold ghost to pass that. And I was going to say that I haven't a trouble in the world, but I have—let me see how many—why, four. First and worst, that Gerald has got to be away a whole fortnight in Switzerland about that Moloch of a business. Second, that maybe you won't forgive me. Third, that I haven't found any very clever man yet to run away with Mabel. Fourth, that the viscount will pinch Florry, for he has long white fingers that look exactly as if they could pinch. Oh, and there's a fifth—I'm not yet such a good house-keeper as I should like to be, and tried to make a pudding yesterday, and it was spoiled, and I can't help thinking that Margery went into the pantry to hide that she was laughing when it stuck to the dish, till I shook it out in pieces on the floor. She made a terrific clattering there, but I'm sure I heard a giggle. So I suppose people always must have their troubles, even when they are married,

"These five blots are five kisses. Margery made five at the bottom of her letter to her sweetheart, and I thought it *such* a good idea. I don't disdain to learn even from a servant. Gerald says we may learn something from everybody.

"Good-bye again. I *wonder* if you ever *will* come to Clapham. Don't mind if Margery seems rather rude. She isn't accustomed to visitors, and always thinks they come to steal. I've tried to talk her out of it, but I can't.

"Good-bye, and now it's for the last time, *really*."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

PETER'S NICK.

"De Nicolas je ne veux pas
Faire un pompeux éloge;
Ne craignez pas, que d'ici-bas
Par mon zèle il déloge:
Car si je faisais son portrait,
Fidèlement et trait pour trait,
Le ciel bientôt nous l'ôterait
Pour en faire un apôtre;
Il vaut bien mieux, que dans ces lieux
Nicolas soit le nôtre."

I DID not see my new brother-in-law after all.

I had started to go down to the village, when, looming gigantic through a dense fog, I saw a stalwart figure approaching me. As it came nearer, I saw that it was Peter's Nick.

But changed, oh, so changed! As he stood facing me, the thick fog enveloping him from head to foot, dripping from his light hair and short, stubbly beard, hanging in minute drops upon his pale eyelashes, every nerve within me told me that he was come in wrath.

He spoke no word. Indeed, I think he could not, for his broad chest was heaving, and out of his usually pale, mild eye, as if the fog were fuel to it, sprang hot sparks of flame and ire.

"Have you come from the village?" I asked, to break the menacing silence.

"Yes, Herre."

He breathed heavily as he answered me, and slightly clenched the fist of his powerful right hand. Of which signs and tokens I took careful notice.

"Do you know if Monsieur Moppert has returned from Lucerne?"

It was ridiculous to note how much deadly venom we both contrived to infuse into our commonplace words. Through mine rang this: "Does the country lout think to arraign me before the bar of his narrow understanding?" Through his: "I've got my fists, and mean to use them."

"Yes, Herre."

"Do you know when?"

"Yesterday evening in the diligence."

"Was he alone?" And my voice was choked with anger.

"Mademoiselle Thérèse was not with him," answered Peter's Nick, accompanying his words with a sound like a maddened bull's first low bellow of defiance. "Tell me why not, Herre."

"Stand back," I cried; "do you think I'll answer questions with your fist under my nose? You've been drinking too early, and it has muddled you. Go back to your pots."

My insulting words produced as much effect upon him as a few smart slaps might do to one suffering intense internal pain. They were, if anything, a relief. Their petty sting acted as a momentary counter-irritation. The angry flush on his low forehead, which this morning seemed to have acquired new breadth, faded somewhat; his eyes, elongated by the new weight upon them, grew round again; his horny fist unclenched itself; his wide nostrils, which, if they could not quiver, could unequivocally snort, ceased this exhibition of bucolic wrath, and he grew calmer.

"*Hören Sie' mal, Herre?*" he said; "I'm not drunk, and you don't think I am, but I'm all abroad in the fog. And my right hand burns, as it never burned before, to strike. It keeps clenching itself; I can't help it."

"Take care what you strike," I replied, still all ablaze, "or you may get your blows returned with interest."

"I'm willing to take my chance of that," he answered, "only I think"—and he looked at his mighty palm with a grim smile—"I think, Herre, that I shall strike the harder."

"Go back to your pots," I said again, "or you'll get into a devil of a mess."

"I won't forget my pots, Herre," he answered, with dignity, "though it seems to me that that is my master's business and not yours."

"Well, stand aside," I said, "and let me pass. I have neither time nor inclination to stay here any longer."

"But I have time and inclination to *make* you, Herre. There is something I must hear from you before you go any farther—something you *must* explain to me."

He placed himself, a strong living barrier, between me and the narrow footpath leading down the hill, and stood waiting.

My pride, stung to the quick by these words and the accompanying action, rushed to a mad alternative. I sprang forward and struck him with all my force a furious blow.

But, still weakened and enfeebled from my long illness, the violence of the reaction, not any deed of his, for he stood as immovable as the everlasting rocks around, made me stagger like a drunken man. I reeled heavily, and should have fallen, felled by my own blow, but that he caught and saved me.

"Herre," he said, in a voice now as gravely gentle as if I had been a wayward child whom he loved, "I had forgotten how weak you are. Sit down here and rest a moment. I should be a base coward to strike you now, but you must hear me all the same."

He supported me to the stone bench outside the *Schenke* and sat down beside me. He did this unconsciously; he never had done so before and never did it afterwards—to-day he was not my inferior, but my judge.

"You see, Herre," he said, "I've never had any book-learning. I only know how to read, and how to write my name, and that's not much. And I'm not given to *Grübeleien*. My wife is. She has all sorts of fancies. It seems to me women mostly have. Fancies she's going to die if she gets a headache; fancies our *Bub's* going straight to the bad if he's a bit wilful; fancies I'm going to kill him if I correct him; fancies I'm going to spoil him if I don't; fancies our cottage is on fire when we are both comfortable in bed; fancies Mademoiselle Thérèse is getting too high to notice her; fancies that the English milord up at Gütsch will bring no luck to the old house harboring him."

As he turned his slow eyes slowly on mine, and I saw the ef-

fort he was making to quicken their power of comprehension, I could not help fancying, in my turn, that if his wife had been there to give birth to a new fancy—to wit, that my face looked very much like conscious guilt—there would have been no want of food on which to rear it.

“But the fancies mostly come to nothing, Herre, except to worry us when there’s no other trouble handy to do it, so I got to thinking little about them until—”

“Until when?” He waited so long that I was forced to prompt him.

“Well, Herre, things come into my mind so slow that you’d think they’d never come at all; but, when they do, they stick. They stick so that I can’t get rid of them anyhow, and that last fancy of my wife’s has got into my head, and won’t get out again.

“I went to see my old teacher, old Joachim Spritmeier, a few days ago,” he continued, “the one who beat the learning into me. Mademoiselle Thérèse had sent me to take him some mufflers she had knitted to keep his poor old rheumatic hands warm during the winter, and I thought perhaps if I told him about this new fancy, he might help me. ‘Ah,’ he said, putting on the mufflers, ‘it was time I gave up being village schoolmaster with my hands like this. I can teach as well as ever,’ he said; ‘my brain is not rheumatic, but my hands are worn out. And what is a schoolmaster fit for,’ he said, ‘when he can’t handle the cane?’

“‘You were a rare one for that,’ I answered; ‘my back tingles now at the sight of you.’

“‘*Nee, Junge, nee,*’ he said, ‘it wasn’t so bad as that, surely. Though I remember it was hard work getting the alphabet into thee. It cost me a heap of trouble.’

“‘It cost you a new cane for every letter,’ I said, laughing, ‘for you broke one over me at each in turn, except at O; somehow or other O looked familiar to me.’”

His round face at this moment, with its flat and formless features, its pale eyelashes, and its smooth, uniform vacuity, looked so exactly like a magnified O that I burst out laughing.

“And well it might,” I said.

“But they stuck, Herre,” he continued, gravely, after a very momentary participation in my mirth; “they stuck like leeches. They’re every one of them in my head now, from A to Z. But

I still remember O the best of all. Why, I was forced to say it over and over with every one of them."

"Did Joachim Spritmeier teach you to believe in fancies?" I asked.

"No, Herre. His teaching was more fitted for the likes of us—hard facts, and harder blows to drive them in us. That was why I took my fancy to him, to make a fact of, or beat out of me."

"What did he say, Nick?"

"He didn't say I was a fool, Herre. I wish he had. I wish he had been able to take his old cane and break it over my back, if so be he could have beaten it out of me. But he only shook his head, and told me the next time it came not to drive it away, but look it full in the face and make it give an account of itself."

"And have you found out, Nick, what it had to say?"

"I have come here this morning to settle that forever," he answered, grimly.

"Nick, believe me, it is as baseless as the fancies of your good wife, and fit for nothing but to worry you."

"It is good for that," he said, "at all events. I dream about it night and day—I who never used to dream at all. And I see horrible things. I see an angel, trodden into the dirt at my feet, and lying there worse than dead.

"Nick, these are the fancies of fever. You are ill."

"And I see," he went on doggedly, "a creature like a man, young and handsome, yet full of wicked thought and wicked desire. And I seem to know that he has murdered the bright angel, and that I must murder him.

"And I see," he continued, silencing me with an energetic movement, "I see him dead, too, and my hands are red with blood, and God is gone from me."

His voice had sunk into a hoarse murmur. The sweat stood thick upon his brow.

"Oh, the fancy!" he said, "the horrible fancy which looks up at me out of every pot I drink; which poisons every morsel I eat; which glares at me out of your eyes, Herre; which even—oh, my God!—hangs dark and heavy over the dear eyes of Mademoiselle Thérèse!

"So this morning, Herre, when I heard that she had not come back with Monsieur Moppert; when I heard from Fleurette *how*

she went away ; when I saw you coming down the hill, smiling a smile of triumph as it seemed, the fog turned to blood all about me. And if you hadn't struck me, why then—"

"You would have done a foul wrong, Nick."

"Perhaps that's why the dear God saved us both, and let you strike me," said he, "for that blow, which wouldn't have hurt a baby, made me feel what a coward I should be to fight you. But you must make things clear to me now—you must tell me now. You must tell me what you have been doing and what you mean to do.

"Of what do you suspect me?" I inquired, somewhat haughtily. The thought of the blow that "wouldn't hurt a baby" chafed and irritated me. That he should set himself up to be my lawgiver chafed me still more. A suspicion that his passionate interference was due to something my pride hated to believe chafed me most of all.

Perhaps Peter's Nick divined my thoughts, for his answer went straight to the root of my angry suspicion and struck it dead.

"Herre, before I tell you that, I must make certain that you understand me. You must not fancy things that are not meant ; you must not think that I— Let me put it in another way, or I shall never be able to tell you."

Was Peter's Nick blushing, or was it the red sunlight now peering at us over a heap of clouds? The fog was falling fast ; soon we should have glorious weather.

"See, Herre," he said ; "I want to make you understand how differently I feel towards Mademoiselle Thérèse to what I should do to any other *Mädel*. She's made of different stuff to us, and we all felt it even when she was in the cradle. I was a great hulking lad then, always in trouble because my limbs would grow out of the clothes covering them, and the little one would cry sometimes when I was beaten. And when she grew bigger I used to carry her about *huck-a-pack*. I can feel her soft little arms round my neck still, and sometimes she would touch my cheek with her lips—mine, great, ugly, stupid Nick's. Little children are like the dear God himself in one way—they see through the coarse outside right to the faithful heart.

"Herre, I wonder sometimes whether up there"—and he turned his face towards the sky, from which the clouds were fast dispersing—"she'll forget once more the difference between

us and touch my face again. But, whether or no, bless her for the past, bless her for it!"

"Ay, bless her!" I murmured.

"So, Herre, I never dreamed—I would not have dared even in my inmost soul to think of her as a *Freier*. I want you to understand that perfectly. It may save trouble. I've got a good wife of my own at home; a hard-working lass she was when I married her, and she's a hard worker still. She's like *Brei*, wholesome porridge, flavored with salt, not with sugar, and none too good for every-day eating. That's the sort of wife a poor man wants as a helpmate in his cottage.

"I've got a child, too—a little lad of the same sort as father and mother; none too beautiful to be scolded as well as loved; punished as well as caressed. I love them both, and am angry with them both sometimes. I'm a heap bigger than either of them and a heap stronger, and I feel they ought to mind me and to look up to me.

"The wife's got to rough it with me, and to bear a bit of roughness from me without making a mountain out of a mole-hill, or thinking an angry word is a sure sign of a faithless heart; and my *Bub's* got to do my bidding. I love them both, and should fret sore if I lost either of them, yet if I go home to-day and the *Suppe's* not ready, or oversalted, I shall scold a bit; and if my little Nick's *ungezogen*, I shall let him feel that my hand can hurt as well as guard him, for that's my duty.

"And I like to have it so," he continued, after a momentary pause; "I choose to have it so. The husband is the head of the wife, and children must obey their parents. I work hard for them, deny myself for their sakes, and if any one ventured to say aught against them or do them harm, I'd fight the whole village in their defence. But at home I like to feel myself a bit above them; to know that, though elsewhere I am servant, there I am *Herr* as well as husband and father; that they look up to me, and respect me as a ruler, who only rules, though, for their good.

"And it seems to me that that's how it ought to be, and that God meant it so."

Was I dreaming, or was it really Nick talking?—round-eyed, obtuse Peter's Nick, who, I had always thought, neither possessed two ideas of his own, nor wit enough, even if he had, to put the two together. He went on:

"But, Herre, I am glad, I am proud to look up to Mademoiselle Thérèse, as proud as I am to bow down before the high altar, and worship there upon my bended knees a woman and a child. Yet listen, Herre; pay heed to what I say, for God knows I mean it: if any one, and were he a brother of the great Emperor of Austria, should do anything to destroy my faith, or stain the snow-white flower reared upon our mountains, I should forget everything but that I am strong."

His downward glance again upon his giant hands and sinewy arms was a strange compound of pride and pain and ire. Then we both sat silent, as insensible to the glorious beauty of the scene before us as if we had been blind.

"It would be impossible"—with these words I at last broke the painful silence—"for me to pretend to misunderstand you any longer, Nick. It would be absurd to do so. But, before entering on my defence, let me perform a simple act of restitution and honesty. You have shown yourself to me in a new and unexpected light to-day, Nick. You have forced me to admire and respect the man who has profoundly humbled me. I do not ask you to take my hand—it is not worthy to clasp yours; but I do ask you with all my heart, Nick, I do ask you to forgive me."

The tears were in my eyes; and if they were not dazzling me, I am sure I saw answering drops in his, as, full of surprise, he turned them towards me.

"How would you feel, Nick," I continued, "if you had lost a priceless jewel, and another man, whom you had despised and outraged, should risk his life to save and restore it to you? How would you feel, Nick, to that man?"

"Herre, I—I—" he stammered.

"You do not understand," I said, "but you shall, Nick. Add one iota to the mighty debt of gratitude I owe you. Tell me, when did the fancy first come?"

"Herre, I am beginning to think—another fancy is coming—"

"Open your arms wide to take in the God-sent stranger, Nick. Clasp it to your wounded bosom; let the balm of its divine presence heal and comfort you."

"Herre, I am dreaming, or I have been all wrong."

"No, Nick; all right, old fellow! Do you think God lets such as you go astray? You fancied yourself on the road to

murder, when it was the road to life. Murderers have been training themselves for the final deed, Nick, all their sinful lives; the last step is the inevitable one of a long and tortuous road they have wilfully chosen."

Where did all the wisdom spring from?—perhaps from my profound happiness. Oh, I had been sharply pruned, but the new grafts were slowly taking root, already putting forth tiny buds, filled with a nobler sap, instinct with higher life, pregnant with promise!

"Herre," said Peter's Nick, "I am in the fog still, but it is falling thick around me, and above it I seem to see light."

"So do I, Nick, so do I."

"Light which, if it's not deceiving me, will soon be brightest sunshine."

"Ay, Nick, *alter Junge*. And now tell me when the fancy first came and what it looked like."

"But if it was an *Irrlicht*, Herre, better try to forget it."

"Even *Irrlichter*, Nick, *ignes fatui*, spring from truth, buried somewhere in the marshes. Tell me, *guter Nick*, when the fancy came."

For my longing soul was thirsting for the nectar of renewed assurance. Who ever wearies of love? Who does not love to hear that he is loved?

"It came," said Nick, slightly smiling—(a great deal of what I said was incomprehensible to the simple fellow, but his heart, a thousand times keener than his intellect, his heart began to understand me)—"it came, Herre, soon after you did. It came with a change in Mademoiselle Thérèse which nobody seemed to notice but me, not even her father. I couldn't help but see it, though, if I'd been asked to describe it, I should have been, as I am now, sorely puzzled."

"Try, try, Nick."

"I am trying, Herre. I think it was her smile first that altered. It wasn't quite so bright, I think, and yet sweeter."

"Go on."

"Tears had got into her smile, Herre, and something else had got into her merry laugh. As for her eyes, I wonder even now that no one else saw the change in them."

"What was it like, Nick?"

"Herre, how can I tell you what it was like, when no words

could do it? I saw something of the same look in the eyes of my own wife when we first put her little *Bub* into her arms. So sweet and full of wonder, Herre; so beautiful, and yet I could not bear to look. For though the tears were smiles, the smiles were tears, too."

He looked searchingly into my face, as if to note the effect of his words. I suppose what he saw there satisfied him, for he went on, more cheerfully :

"Sometimes she would come out of your room, Herre, hardly seeming to feel the ground she trod on. Then I would stand aside to let her pass, for I knew that we were all nothing to her—all forgotten. Sometimes she would come out with death in her face, and then I would draw nearer, my heart burning hot with the longing to murder the man who had murdered her joy, and my faith along with it."

Was it sublimest happiness or intensest pain contracting my heart? Oh, the boundary line between the two is but a hair's-breadth, the climax of one close touching the other!

"And now, Herre, that is all."

"Not quite all, Nick." And here I whispered something low into his ear.

I shall never forget the terrific grasp with which Nick's two mighty hands almost reduced mine to a shapeless mass, after he had convinced himself that my whispered words were a true index to my heart. It has made me shy ever since of offering the hand of fellowship to giants. He put his mark upon me that day, did honest Nick. He drew blood. But he poured me out in return a full draught of nectar. My thirsty soul drank deep and long, and I too "was satisfied."

Warm and bright and full, the sunshine streamed down upon the earth; and the tear-drops, still heavy on the lids of the woodflowerets, smiled back a beaming response. Over the tops of the trees beyond Gütsch not a breath of air was stirring, and the birds' sweet minor faltered, as if in awed recognition of a diviner song than theirs. Deep, profound, intense was the peace around and within me, and with Goethe I sang:

"Over the mountains
Turmoils cease;
The murmuring fountains
Whisper peace.

Hardly a breath
 In the wood, where the birds sing low :
 Patience, and thou this peace shalt know
 Certain as death."

CHAPTER XXIX.

MY MOTHER—THE WIND.

"in such hour

* * * * *
 Thought was not ; in enjoyment it expired."

WORDSWORTH (*Excursion*).

"Wenn im Menschen Friede und Fülle sind, so will er nichts mehr genießen, als sich ; jede Bewegung, sogar die körperliche, verschüttet den vollen Nektarkelch."—JEAN PAUL.

PETER'S NICK had long since returned to his work in the *Schenke* ; William too passed me with a grave yet kindly greeting ; and I still sat upon the stone bench outside the house, with the warm sunlight full upon me, lost to everything but a profound sense of peace—rest after toil—ease after pain—victory after defeat. At such moments life pauses : our senses grow misty ; the newly oiled machinery of our incessantly active brain moves with imperceptible softness ; happiness, long vainly wooed, turns smiling towards us—not as a wayward mistress, whose caresses madden while they enthrall, but with the self-abnegating tenderness of a mother. Instead of exciting, she calms our fevered pulses, and soothes us into perfect rest upon her gently beating bosom ; where, like convalescent children, we forget the suffering which is over, forget even that we are happy for very happiness.

But life never halts long, neither under "double loads" nor when all load is taken off us. The order to march comes, alas ! too often when rest is at its sweetest. "Didst hear the bugle, brother ? See, I will help thee get again into harness, and thou wilt help me. Here is thy knapsack ; let me strap it on again—a rude but efficient pad over the raw spot where the leather galled thee. Thy bottle is filled from the sparkling spring, and there is fresh bread in thy wallet. Courage ! we shall rest again

ere night, and dream of the blessed time when, our duty bravely done, we shall rest for aye. Courage, brother! we were born to fight and work, shoulder to shoulder, helping and loving one another."

The so-called inferior animals—let us hope, let us believe—have such periods often and long; to man, with a brain which *must* analyze, must logically prove that sweet is sweet, instead of simply tasting it, such moments are as rare as they are fleeting. Like a sweet odor wafted direct from heavenly reared flowers, they salute us on their passage, but that is all. Like a drop of ambrosia, they touch our yearning lips to teach us to believe in heaven; but who has tasted many such drops?

I was aroused from my trance in an unexpected and startling manner. A little elfish hand, cold as ice, was suddenly laid upon mine, and my raised eyes met a pair of elfish ones, which were examining me from top to toe with a keen and curious intentness. I was too amazed to speak, and for a few moments this creature or being scrutinized me, and I it, in silence.

The elfish hand belonged to a body more elf-like still, and for a second or two I was really unable to determine whether it were that of a child or woman, or of an unknown animal clothed to represent one of these.

It wore the short Swiss petticoat, falling slim and straight in scanty folds from the waist to the knees—its bare legs and feet, though brown as a berry and hairy as an animal's, as beautiful in form and shape as Thérèse's own. It wore, tightly laced over its meagre bosom, the scarlet bodice of Swiss girlhood; leaving shoulders and throat bare like hers, though with a difference.

With a difference as immense as the distance between pole and equator. Here were no bewildering dimples in the velvety softness of perfect flesh, here no ivory unblemished roundness to ravish and delight; one felt inclined rather to close one's outraged eyes to the horrible deformity, to protest in the interests of indignant humanity against its exposure. If such things exist, let them, in the name of our fineness of feeling—our æstheticism—let them be covered!

For, entirely filling up the cavity between chin and breast, as shamelessly exposed to view as if it had been—good heavens!—an ornament, hung an unsightly bag of flesh—hung, did I

say?—no, danced, moved, vibrated, brimful apparently of a horrible life of its own, even when its unfortunate owner was passive.

I knew what it was, though I shuddered as if it had been the first time I had seen it—the *goître*, the scourge of lovely Switzerland, the terrible penalty many have to pay for living among the mountains. I had turned away sickened eyes from the sight often enough in the Rhone Valley, a very hotbed for its cultivation, though never here before in healthier Schwyz.

An angel's face would have been rendered odious by such a termination, and the face upon which my fascinated eyes were resting was by no means an angel's. I should have been inclined to descend among a very different race of beings to find its prototype. Yet it had an undeniable attraction of its own. The brow, tanned to a coloring more animal than human, was already corrugated, the cheeks sunken, the full lips pallid; but the eyes were vividly beautiful, their irises large and richly colored, the thick brows above them finely arched, and their black lashes long and curled. Over the back of this creature fell, nearly to its ankles, the greatest quantity of hair I ever saw on human head—hair of a deep red, and flaming in the golden sun-rays like living fire.

“Ugh,” said she, the opening of her large-lipped mouth disclosing a perfect set of teeth, white and sharp as a puppy's—letting her wonderful eyes run over me from head to foot several times in succession, during which their irises repeatedly changed color, and were now of a deep red brown, now of a vivid green, now more black than their pupils—“you are odious. You are a devil. I detest you.”

Whether she was addressing me or making of herself a mouth-piece for *my* thoughts, I cannot tell. I only know she might have read her words on my forehead or sucked them from my lips. Involuntarily I raised my hand to ward her off, as if she had been in very truth a demon.

Then I saw that she was but mortal, for she was evidently accustomed to blows. She sprang back a step, lightly enough, and covered her elfish head with her elfish hands.

“I am not going to strike you.”

“You'd better not, or I'll tell my mother.”

This remark was so commonplace and so childlike that I smiled at my own vague fear.

"Who is your mother?" I said, fear making room for pity, as I put my hand into my trousers pocket for a franc.

The answer was a startling one:

"The Wind."

"The Wind? What do you mean, imp?"

"Have you never seen her, Herre? 'St!"—lifting an uncanny finger—"she is sleeping now in the wood; you can only just hear her breathe if you listen softly. The birds know she is asleep, and dare not sing for fear of waking her; the water knows it too, and is dimpling all over with smiles, because no one can drive away its lovers, the sunbeams, until she awakes. See how straight and still the trees stand around her, holding their green umbrellas wide to shield her from the sunshine; not even a saucy leaflet dares to rustle, or, pouf! she would tear it off and drown it in the lake."

"Child—if child you are—who put such thoughts into your head?"

"S-st! S-st! Herre, speak low, as I do, or maybe she will awake and punish you. When she is angry, all the world is frightened; her eyes flash red light, and her voice is terrible. The earth trembles, and the mountains shake; even the great sky itself grows pale as death, and the water turns raving mad. For she drives everything before her, and those that will not run or bend are beaten to death."

"Maiden, thou art inspired, or possessed, or a poet in a strange garb." I spoke smiling, to hide something—not a smile.

"Herre, you may mock, because you are both blind and wicked; but, though your false mouth laughs, there is no laugh in your eye. Your eye is afraid, for it would like to see, and cannot. But my mother, the Wind, knows all about you and the wickedness in your heart, and she bound a rod for you long ago. I mean to come when she uses it, and listen to your cries, and laugh to think how little they will help you—for I hate you, I hate you!"

"What have I ever done to make you hate me?"

"Oh, the rod is thick and strongly bound, and every sharp twig will sting you like the forked tongue of a serpent. My mother wanted to drown you in the lake, but I begged her to spare you. I did not know you then, for I was blind and fool-

ish, but I know you now—white outside, black within—and I hate you, I hate you !”

“Imp, tell me why.”

“I saw a drop that looked like water, Herre, in a dear eye, out of which nothing but love ever shone before, even for me, who have nobody else to love but my mother, the Wind. Yet, though the drop looked like clearest water, it was bitter, bitter, bitter, as the bitterest juice of the most poisonous flower in the wood, and it had been pressed out of a bleeding wound ; and, oh, I am afraid it will put out the light of the dear eye, and poison the love within it—and I hate you, I hate you !”

I could not see the strange, weird face, for something had destroyed my vision. I could not ask again why she hated me, for something was holding tight the strings of my voice, and to speak would have been to break them.

“Oh, I like to see my mother in a rage,” continued the child, her low voice full of fierce enthusiasm, “for, though she hurts everything else in the world, she never hurts me. I like to see her tear up the obstinate trees, which won’t go down on their knees before her, to lash the vain and fickle water with. I like to hear everything shriek and howl when she beats it. But I like most of all—oh, I love my mother best then—to see her creep slyly in through the keyhole, to nip and bite and pinch old Madame Sauerwein, till her groans frighten the neighbors. People say it is the rheumatism, but I know better—I know it is my mother, the Wind.”

A sharp voice, issuing through an opening window, came to my relief. It was the voice of Fleurette.

“*Mieschen, was machst du da ?*”

Again a backward spring, again an elfish hand before an elfish head. Mieschen’s world was evidently accustomed to adopt summary measures for the disciplining of Mieschen’s peculiarities.

“*Mach, dass du fort kommst, Teufelsbrut.*”

“Thy *Muhme* sent me—”

“I’ll be bound she did, and also that she’ll send thee *somewhere else* when thou gets back again.”

“With a message for the English milord.”

“Give it then and depart, or I’ll see if there isn’t a stick—”

“Oh, my mother shall hurt thee for it, muttered the child ;

"she shall get into thy throat and make it sore; or into thy eyes and make them water; or into thy back, with a *Hexenschuss*, hard as iron and sharp as steel."

"If the great Council at Berne hadn't done away with the law—a good and necessary law—which would have subjected such as thee to 'the question,'" said Fleurette, who, not having heard a word of the child's vindictive speech, naturally construed it into a worse form than the original, "thou'd have learned to keep thy wickedness to thyself, for fear of broken limbs and tortured members. But they'll have to go back to the good old laws yet, made for the safety of honest folk, will the learned gentlemen. Thou'lt yet end upon a *Scheiterhaufen*, child of sin."

"It was my mother made thee deaf," continued the unfortunate child; "she got into thy ears one winter's night and killed the hearing in them. Soon she'll get into thy wicked eyes and make them blind."

"Herre, ask her what she wants," said Fleurette, crossing herself; "who knows but she's got the power to do wickedness, as well as the will; maybe she'll tell you and go."

"What do you want of me, child?" I inquired.

"The Frenchman has come back," she answered, turning her strange eyes upon me once more, while the horrible appendage to her chin shook and trembled.

"I know that."

"But he is not coming to see you, nor must you come to see him to-day."

"Why not?"

"Because to-day he has prettier fish than you to fry."

"What do you mean?"

"Sunshine-haired fish, summer-sky-eyed fish, snow-white fish."

"Tell me this moment."

"Sleeping fish, weeping fish, not keeping fish."

"Speak plainly, and I'll give you a franc to buy bonbons."

"Let me see it, then," with a quick change of manner.

The next moment I was alone on the stone bench, minus the franc; at my ear the echo of a mocking voice, saying: "Ask Fleurette, deaf Fleurette, angry Fleurette, who'd give her best gown to be able to beat me, but is afraid of my mother, the

Wind ;" and gleams of tawny locks vanishing before my eyes, all ablaze in the red sunlight like living flames of fire.

Truly, "the female form divine" had revealed itself to me in strangely varying forms in Switzerland. Thérèse—oh, my Thérèse, art thinking of me now? art feeling my spiritual presence in one fibre of thy *Herzchen*, in anything like the intensity with which every nerve and tissue of my body is impregnated with thine? How could I give thee up, when thou hast subtly insinuated thy essence into the life-blood of my system; when our souls are already joined together in holy matrimony; no more—never more—two, but one, for time and for eternity?

I had forgotten what I meant to say. What matters it? What matters anything to me now except my love? Thou wast right, Goethe—man whom we forgive so much because of thy grand legacy. Thou wast right! For the first time I comprehend thy words: "*Es ist eine Forderung der Natur, dass der Mensch mitunter betäubt werde, ohne zu schlafen.*"

With the beloved name upon my lips—bugle sound and sweetest opiate at once—I sank anew into a glad syncope—into the sublime intoxication of love.

And the universe composed for me a new melody; soothed me into rest with the sweetest song man ever heard. And its name, its theme, its tune, were all Thérèse!

CHAPTER XXX.

TAKEN TO TASK.

"Warum erkennt es denn das Männergeschlecht nicht, dass die Liebende in der Stunde der Liebe ja nichts weiter thun will, als Alles für den Geliebten, dass die Frau *für* die Liebe alle Kräfte, *gegen* sie so kleine hat, und dass sie mit derselben Seele und in derselben Minute eben so leicht ihr Leben hingäbe, als ihre Tugend? Und dass nur der fordernde und nehmende Theil schlecht sei, besonnen und selbstsüchtig?"—JEAN PAUL.

As the mountain would not come to Mahomet, Mahomet had to go to the mountain; we all know that. And we all know, perhaps, quite as well, how very often we ourselves have been compelled to adopt the same humiliating expedient. In spite of my impatience, Moppert did not come, and finally I had to go and seek him. In obedience to the strange child's message, I

waited that day, but rose very early the next morning, unable to wait longer.

I hurried down the hill. Impatience drove her sharp spur into me, and I hurried faster and faster. For I was hungering, thirsting, dying for news of Thérèse.

I had no difficulty in finding out the house of Madame Sauerwein, where my friend lodged, although I had never been there before, and soon I was standing at the door, rapping loudly.

My impatient rap was answered, or rather echoed, by several other raps on an apparently sentient body which resented them by smothered mutterings—not cries. Virtuous Indignation, instantly assuming the office of a *preux chevalier*—it has a leaning that way—rushed into the room headlong, carrying me with it, and exploded on the spot.

“You ought to be ashamed,” I said, “to beat a child.”

But even with the word “child” upon my lips, I faltered, and all but changed it into “monkey.” Then I saw that it was my singular acquaintance of the day before—the audacious claimant of the Wind’s affection, upon whom the cudgel of retribution was falling. It was Mieschen, who, taking advantage of my entrance, wriggled herself free from the grasp of an old woman, and fled for refuge behind a perfect mountain of a stove, from which place of sanctuary she menaced and mouthed, with the most horrible grimaces and the most admirable impartiality, both chastiser and rescuer.

Virtuous Indignation, feeling probably very small after her fit of uncalled-for heroics, slunk out of the room; even tender-hearted Pity drew back in disgust; and Justice, pointing to a pool of milk upon the floor, wherein lay swamped some broken fragments, said sternly: “Look at that!” If ever imp in this world looked as if it wanted a whipping, that imp did.

In the meantime the old woman, whom I rightly judged to be Madame Sauerwein herself, slowly hung up the cudgel, her own crutch, on the side of the chair whereon she was seated, and as slowly turned a pair of deeply set gray eyes on me. I remained standing—not being invited to sit—scrutinizing and scrutinized.

I saw a woman of about sixty years of age, whose resolute face, moulded as massively as a man’s, was rendered still more masculine-looking by a snowy beard, over which her cap-strings

were neatly tied. Her face, though hard-featured and deeply lined, was not without a certain manly comeliness, which, perhaps, in the bloom of her "teens" — hardly later — had been beauty. Her head was covered with a cap of white linen, stiffly starched and scrupulously clean. Crossed over her bosom was a snowy kerchief of the same material. Her short gray frieze gown just touched her ankles, and was carefully protected by a stout blue-checked apron. Her gouty feet rested on a wooden stool. Her gouty and swollen hands, half hidden in black mittens, had immediately taken up the inevitable knitting on laying down the stick. The sight of these hands inspired me with no small respect for their owner. I was confident that her recent exertion must have been attended with far more bodily pain to herself than to the child. I was confident that Madame Sauerwein was a person of character.

While making these observations I knew that Madame Sauerwein was taking stock of me quite as intently. Her keen gray eyes, the huge horn-cased spectacles pushed up on her massive square forehead, were gradually becoming cognizant of every spot upon me. I began to grow bewildered. It seemed not minutes, but ages, that I had been standing there, the low hum of the kettle in one of the many apertures of the stove growing louder, the vague mutterings and menaces of the child behind it growing fainter; the white pool upon the tiled floor gradually becoming absorbed into its crevices; a well-disciplined kitten furtively sniffing at it, but evidently conscious of consequences if it went further; the nasal tick of the cuckoo-clock behind me like a snore; the final "Humph!" which issued from the masculinely adorned mouth of Madame Sauerwein.

A doubtful "Humph!" an insinuating "Humph!" a very mortifying and humiliating "Humph!"

"You think you are very wise, young gentleman," she said, at last, in the deep guttural of the Swiss *patois*, "but you've a great deal to learn yet. Don't you know that there are two sides to everything?"

If I looked as I felt, I must have looked foolish indeed. I sank into the chair, towards which with scant courtesy she pointed. The child broke into an uncanny laugh.

"What are you come for?" said the old woman. "Who are you?"

"The gentleman is drunk," said the child, emerging from her hiding-place.

"*Pfui!* drunk, and only eight o'clock in the morning!"

My astonishment at this assertion somewhat dissipated the maze in which my bewildered senses were wandering. The snoring clock behind repeated it in a series of convulsive sounds, like the voice of a cuckoo in agony awaking out of a horrible nightmare. It was really—for my own watch confirmed it—only eight o'clock in the morning.

"I know who he is," continued the child, "but I will not tell thee, *Grossmütterchen*, because thou hast beaten me."

"Beaten thee! If I only had the power! But I will ask the Herr Kaplan to come and drive the unclean spirit out of thee with a *Tauende*."

"He beat me once with a rope-end," said the child in her peculiarly low yet sharply distinct accents—now absolutely discordant, now as sweet and mournful as the birds' own minor—"and broke his leg afterwards. 'Twas in winter-time, and my mother's sharp breath had frozen the water I threw before his door, and my mother's maidens, the Zephyrs, had covered it thick with snow. Oh, he came out with his eyes upturned as if the earth were hardly good enough for him to walk on, and *im Nu*, there he lay, groaning and crying out for help. Hu, hu, hu! how I laughed, and my mother with me! 'Hu, hu, hu!' it said, '*Die, welche Andere schlagen, sollen auch geschlagen werden, und die, welche meinem Kinde Bösses thun, sollen auch leiden.*' Oh, I love her, I love her, my mother—the Wind!"

"Do you hear, Herre?" said the old woman significantly. "There are two sides to everything."

"Soon she will come again, *Grossmütterchen*, to nip thee and bite thee and scratch thee. Thou may'st call it the rheumatism, but it's my mother's sharp teeth, her fierce claws, her stinging *Ruthe*. And she does it all for love of me, my dear, dear mother—the Wind!"

"Go and fetch some more milk, Mieschen, for the kind Frenchman, who gives thee centimes. Go, and I will forgive thee."

"Not yet; I will not go yet."

"I've had ten children," groaned the old woman, turning uneasily on her chair, "ten lads and lasses, and not one of them would have ventured to say 'I will not' to me. Nor would they

venture now that they are grown men and women, with lads and lasses of their own. Whatever else we leave untaught in Switzerland, we teach our children to love their fatherland, obey its laws, and honor their parents. I've taken the *Tauende* to thy mother when she was a big wench in service with the *Frau Gräfin*, *selig*, and she stood to bear it, as still as if she had been but a helpless infant on my arm. It is only thou who ever ventured to defy me—*Mädel*, hated and loved for her sake—grand-child and none, in a breath."

She groaned again and shook her heavy head.

"But perhaps the *gnädiger Herr* (looking at me) will help a helpless old woman; take my crutch and *ein Bischen Deutsch mit dir sprechen* (administer a little correction to thee)."

"If he does," answered the child quickly, advancing towards my chair with a step light as a fawn's, though the loathsome appendage to her chin took away effectually all idea of grace, "he shall never see Thérèse again, never look upon her bonny face, or kiss her sweet lips any more."

I saw my involuntary start reflected in the old woman. I felt her eyes upon me with renewed interest, though I could not raise my own and fearlessly meet them. Again time seemed to stand still and lengthen a period of suspense indefinitely, as did once the moon, at Joshua's behest, in the valley of Ajalon.

The clock had stopped, too. Its nasal tick began again with the words which followed:

"Dost love Thérèse?" said the child, her sharp elbows on my knee; her sharp eyes, with their weird change of color, seeming to pierce mine; her flexible voice cadenced to a tone of such pathetic sweetness as bird never knew; "dost mean to marry her?"

"Ay, ay," responded the old woman, in a deep guttural tone of approbation, "that's the question, Mieschen. That's the touch-stone wherewith to try if the love's of the right sort or not. I didn't think so much sense had been in thee, child. But thou'lt get no answer. I put it to thy father: "Dost mean to marry her?" I said, and the only answer was a death and a birth cry, both strong enough to murder my heart. Ah, *Mädel*, *die Manns-leut'*—*die gnädigen Herren noch am wenigsten*—*lassen sich nicht zur Rede stellen*. They govern the world, child, the wicked world, and won't punish themselves. Go and fetch the milk, and don't waste thy time any longer."

To my surprise the child made no further demur. As quietly and submissively as if obedience had been a necessity, she opened a cupboard door, took thence a jug, and sedately departed, leaving the old woman and myself alone together.

"I know who you are now," said she, knitting industriously; "you are the Englishman from Gütsch."

"Yes."

"And you have come to see Monsieur Moppert."

"Yes."

"He is not here at present. He has business to attend to; but he will be back by-and-by."

"May I stay till he comes?"

"Yes, you may stay, but you must not expect me to entertain you. I'm a poor lame old woman. There isn't a joint in my body that doesn't ache. And inside me my heart aches worst of all."

"You have had much trouble?"

"Trouble? The dear God above us knows! Ten lads and lasses, and a husband paralyzed ever since my youngest was a baby. My youngest, my Minchen—the bonniest lass in all the country side. Ever since I lost her I have prayed for nothing except that the dear God would take me, but he seems to have forgotten me altogether."

"You have lost your daughter, then?"

"Lost her? Yes, Herre, lost her in more than one way. Oh, it is a wicked, wicked world! Yet I was happy in it once."

"And it is a great thing to have been happy."

"Is it, Herre? You are a boy, and I am an old woman and could teach you something, maybe, if you would listen to me. But you will not learn. I would not learn either, till the dear God took the rod and made me do so with stripes that are raw and bleeding still. Yet I was happy once. Oh me! I was happy once, and thought the world was a sweet, green, shady nest for doves to coo in."

"Tell me, when?"

"When I was a lassie, Herre, whom you, perhaps, would have smiled upon, as well as all the other *Mannsleut'*. So slim was my waist, it seemed made on purpose for a sly arm to encircle; so rosy were my lips, which the *Buben* thought were only pouting and rounded for them to kiss. You may

smile, Herre, but it is true, though I am an ugly old woman now."

"I did not smile."

"Not with your lips, Herre—but what matters it whether you believe me or no? My Minchen was more beautiful still, more's the pity and shame and disgrace! So beautiful that—oh, how can I tell it! how can I describe what went on in darkness and night when she was *Kammermädchen* of the Frau Gräfin von Olenhusen, and me at home forgetting my trouble in joy at her being next door to a lady and made so much of by the great folk? How can I tell you of the white bosom beating high with joy and hope when he put the sparkling jewels—his purchase-money—upon it, and the aching heart of gathering doubt beneath? Of the fair face, more beautiful than any lady's, and the rage and despair and agony in the terraced walk on the dark night? Of the kisses and the honeyed words and the false vows? Of the farewell and the forgetting; and the midnight pond where Will-o'-the-wisps held the funeral torches, night-birds croaked, and snow-white lilies drew back shuddering from a dead human face, whiter than they? Oh, 'tis a wicked, wicked world! governed by men who make laws for their own advantage, crush the sufferer and uphold the sinner. Talk about the wind, as Mieschen does! Oh, it and the pale moon could tell strange stories! Go, I have no patience with you."

I half rose, hardly knowing whether she meant me or not, but was violently reseated by the vehemence of her next question.

"Where's the *Mädel*?" she said.

"What *Mädel*?"

"Thérèse."

"I do not know."

"You do not know? Why, then, do you tremble and turn away your face, which is as red as a convicted sinner's?"

"You have no right to ask me. I did not come here to be questioned."

"Ah, I knew you would not answer me. But I have answer enough already. And I do not know whether to be sorry or glad. It was she gave me this cap and this kerchief. It was she who made me this blue apron and knitted these mittens for me. It is she who changes Mieschen from a devil into a human child. It is she who, though she can be sharp sometimes—

Fleurette tells me so—comes into this room only to warm and to cheer it, like a living sunbeam.”

(Oh, my maiden, my maiden!)

“And for that I am sorry. But I am glad, because my Minchen was as beautiful, and yet was bruised and broken, while the light in *her* eyes had not a mote to sully it. I am glad, because *my* lily’s purity was soiled, and she was stainless. I have suffered so much that I want others to suffer with me—to be forced to groan as I do—to share my bitter pain.”

I thought I saw Moppert coming, leading Mieschen by the hand, and that stayed me.

“Minchen, too, was beautiful. Minchen, too, heard false vows from *hochwohlgeborenen Lippen*. Minchen died, unshriven and unabsolved.”

Thank Heaven, it *was* Moppert! I could not have borne it much longer. But even he looked coldly at me—his smile of welcome forced and constrained; his hand so loose in my warm grasp that it fell like a dead one when I dropped it.

But his little companion, that land-mermaid, half inimitable grace, half horrible deformity, putting down the milk, advanced eagerly to propound the previous, and now more than ever inopportune, questions: “Dost love Thérèse?” she said, her words intoned with a mournful sweetness like that of a dirge chanted over a dead child; “dost mean to marry her?”

CHAPTER XXXI.

“BIM, BIM, BIM!” SAID THE BELL.

“An insult to his honor
No *man* forgives, ye ken;
Revenge, the maid’s dishonor,
A virtue is, in men.”

Translated from BODENSTEDT (*Mirza Schaffy*).

“On est plus criminel quelquefois qu’on ne pense.”

VOLTAIRE (*Edipe*.)

Two or three hours later Moppert and I were walking up to the spot where the Grand Hotel and Pension of Axenstein now stands, through the then solitary wood.

Whenever I see a wood in its late October splendor, I think of that day; whenever I smell autumn's peculiar odor or feel autumn's peculiar breath upon my cheek, bringing with it a sense of strength and vigor as if intended as a reminder for those of weak faith that, though the aged year is drawing to its wintry end, man shall live—I hear again the crackling of the fallen leaves under our feet, and the birds' joyous warbling above us; see the rich mosses and the fairy cups; smell the lichens; and through it all hear Moppert's voice; its sweet-sounding Parisian accents falling mellow on my ear—the sentences beginning soft and low and rising towards the end like swelling music.

Schwyz lay beneath us in the valley, guarded by two needle-shaped promontories, the bare, straight, rugged sides of which make them look like stern sentinels, whose watchword is "duty," and who, faithful to it, scorn any effeminate and emasculating ornamentation whatsoever. There is no softening snow upon their summits, no verdant tresses to hide their barrenness. Only sometimes towards evening they brighten into beauty. The sun places crowns of gold upon their bald heads, and, draping them in crimson, purple, and amber, transforms them into gods.

But now they stood, frowning heavily down upon the sensuous valley, basking in the brightness and warmth of the noon-day sun, and presuming to slumber before the day's work was ended. Even the convent bell, drowsily summoning the faithful to confession of sin, almost sank into sleep during the very act. "Bim, bim, bim!" it said. "Life is short! Bim, bim, bim, bim! Come, and confess."

But there was no rest for me. Moodily I paced along by the side of Moppert, cut to the heart by his refusal to take my proffered arm, wounded to the quick by the consciousness of a cloud of separation which had risen up between us; yet too proud still, oh, much too proud! to ask him for an explanation. We are called upon to suffer much in this probatory world, but the keenest suffering, the sharpest pain, we inflict upon ourselves.

And now even my sense of wrong, chameleon-like, changed its color and resolved itself into a sense of justice. Not only pride, but shame, too, tied my tongue, and sternly forbade any attempt at vindication. I could not make foregoing wrong right because I had determined to do right for the future. I should

not be able to escape the punishment of which *every* wrong bears in itself the inevitable germs.

The thought of what might have been began to oppress me as heavily as if I had really reached the awful end of the awful road upon which I had entered. I had dallied with sweet poison, I had put it to my own sinfully enamoured lips and to the lips of another. Was I any less guilty because it had been dashed out of my hand?

Some odious remembrances of my short London career rose to my mind, filling me with a deep repugnance to myself. If Thérèse had not fled before me, her pure soul been a whit less spotless, her beautiful body tenanted by a less beautiful mind—what then?

“Bim, bim, bim!” said the sleepy bell, breaking suddenly into shrillness; “bim, bim, bim, bim!”

How did I know either that expiation was possible, that Providence would allow me now to love in the only way in which love is worthy of the name? In defiance of danger I had voluntarily chosen to wander on the brink of a precipice, and I had been but one inch from the abyss.

But an inch is as good as an ell when you can see.

Yes. But when you are blinded by passion, lost to sense of past or future, conscious only of one intoxicating moment—what then?

“Bim, bim, bim!” said the bell, sending up a bugle note, sharp and distinct, from the valley; “bim, bim, bim, bim!”

My eye fell before Moppert’s look of searching inquiry. I dared not vindicate myself.

“Do you wish me to tell you why I went to Lucerne?” inquired Moppert, coldly.

“As you please,” I answered, as coldly.

But then my pride gave way, and left me full of passionate yearning.

“How did you leave her?” I sobbed; “only tell me that.”

“Somewhat composed,” answered Moppert; “somewhat refreshed after her night’s rest far away from him. Still there must have been an attachment. She told us frankly that she must escape or die, yet she shrank from the separation, almost as much as she longed for it. It was truly a case where the physician’s unflinching hand was needed to take off, even by

force, the mortifying limb. She had lost all power to help herself except by one irrevocable act. I verily believe that we have saved her from that."

He hardly seemed to comprehend my bewilderment, or hardly chose to do so.

"*Au reste, mon cher,*" he continued, adopting a new and colder form of address for the accustomed "*mon ami,*" "one difficulty is cleared out of your way. She is not *bourgeoise*, as I imagined. She is penniless, it is true, but of as noble birth as even your father could desire. Even he can hardly object to your union with a Countess of Mandelsloh. Her ancestors have been *Grafen* for generations, their patent of nobility going back much further than most of your English dukes."

And what if she had been a princess of the blood? what if she had been a queen? Love is no respecter of persons. It laughs at patents of nobility. It transfixes a King Cophetua with a beggar-maid's bright eyes.

This beautiful lady, about whom I had raved and dreamed a month before, was now as indifferent to me as the Mount Pilate in the brilliance of whose doubly reflected rays she had stood transfigured. Disgusted with the world's sensual pleasures, wearying for love, I had filled the vacuum in my heart with a golden calf set up to represent him. But real love had come long since, full of indignation, to cast out the usurper. And, but for very shame of the Mentor beside me, I would have drawn back from the work, to the doing of which I had stretched forth so eager a hand.

"You have fastidious notions as to beauty, monsieur," continued my Brutus, with a new sword-thrust. "You never admired Mademoiselle Thérèse, you know, although the rest of us—*nous autres*—thought her as pleasant to contemplate as the sun at his rising. But it is well. Youth should be blind to the charms of all save one—the one. And 'the one' in this case is beautiful as an angel."

If I had not been able to speak before, how could I speak now?

"I have done my best for you, monsieur. Already the fair countess smiles through her tears when your name is mentioned. She remembers you perfectly; spoke of you with keen interest; called you—do not let me make you vain—'*Ce beau jeune homme*

Anglais. Why do you look at me so reproachfully? *Ah, je comprends, c'est bien naturel*—you prefer to do your courting yourself.”

“I prefer, I wish— Oh, my God!” I cried, standing still in my despair, my back resting against the mossy trunk of an aged beech-tree, a solitary grandparent among a group of blooming offspring, “What shall I do? what shall I do!”

“Bim, bim, bim?” said the bell, sending up its call in a faint desponding whisper; “bim, bim, bim, bim!”

“What shall you do, *mon cher*? Ah, good Mother Nature will teach you that better than I. Murmur a few soft words—senseless folly to the rest of the world; sweetest wisdom to her to whom they are addressed. Courage, monsieur, the words will come as easily as the kisses; there is a time in his life when every man is a poet. And the road before you is smooth as this soft turf under our feet, the long-hoped-for goal so near.”

“Let us go on,” I said, suddenly and imperiously.

“Ah, monsieur, I understand and honor your impatience, even while I smile at it. ‘*La jeunesse n’a qu’un temps.*’ Alas! I myself am in the autumn of my life, like the year, but I can rejoice in your May; in the luxuriance of its bloom—hawthorn, lilac, syringa, nightingale-song—all in one glorious whole.”

Where could I escape to? Where could I run and hide from him?

“Not so fast, *mon cher*. My heart has a memory of May still green within it, but my legs have no longer the untiring vigor of youth, nor my lungs its strength. You must have patience with my many infirmities. As for you, it is easy to understand why the mention of possible exhaustion is as a tinkling cymbal in your ears to-day. Iron has been infused into your blood, monsieur, and the most potent restorative the world knows of injected into your nerves.”

“Oh, I am deliriously happy! I am elated to desperation! I am frantic with an overdose of delight! I am dying from repletion.”

“Gently, monsieur; your blood is too fiery for an Englishman, because it contains also the one-sided earnestness of your nation. We—*nous autres Français*—are all ablaze in a moment, but we soon flicker and fade. You catch fire more slowly, but, *par le bon Dieu!* the intense flame of it is dangerous—it scorches me.”

"And it is burning me to death, monsieur."

"*Soyez tranquille, mon ami.* Sit down with me under the cool shade of this spreading oak. Weep a little; it will ease you. Your cheek is like a coal of living fire, your pulse at fever heat. Just now, under the beech-tree, your face was pallid, your eye dimmed and hopeless, you shunned my eye, which would fain have penetrated to the cause of your changed aspect. Now you look at me with fire in your glance, but I am still troubled. I fear the pains of love will always be greater for you than its pleasures."

I threw myself upon the turf at his feet, the gloriously tinted wood undulating before us, in as gay and variegated hues as Joseph's coat of many colors, down to the shimmering water. He made me rest my hot head upon his knee, stroking my burning cheek as tenderly as Thérèse might have done.

"You shall give the key of your locked heart to Moppert by-and-by," he said, "and though he must not spare you—only aid you if necessary to pluck out the offending eye or cut off the offending arm, he will do it in love. Let us talk of something else, till you are calmer. What have you been doing in my absence?"

"Growing older, monsieur."

"That is true," he said, earnestly; "so much older that it puzzles me. So many new lines in your face, that I tremble for a premature age. Gray hairs, too," pulling one, smilingly, from out my light-brown hair. "And it is not only you in whom a week has worked such a marvellous change. I met William yesterday; he has grown quite bent since I saw him last. Peter's Nick might be fourscore. Little Mieschen is a woman. Even Mademoiselle Thérèse—"

He stopped, raising his head and one warning finger simultaneously. I stopped too—my very breath.

"Did you hear a footstep as if some one were moving below us—a rustling as of tree-branches disturbed?"

"I heard nothing, monsieur, but the sigh of the gentle wind and your own words, 'even Mademoiselle Thérèse—'"

"Do you see something white gleaming through the green undergrowth—a moving something like the flowing garments of a wood nymph?"

"I see nothing, monsieur, but the gleaming of the water,

snowy white where snowy clouds are passing over it. You were speaking of—of Mademoiselle Thérèse.”

But he sprang to his feet, looking eagerly down towards the lake; his eyes fixed, anxious, and dilating. “My sight has the peculiarity of age,” he murmured; “it is better than yours for the far distance. I see, I am sure I see—Chut! what is that?”

“Bim, bim, bim!” said the dying bell, its faint voice only just audible; “bim, bim, bim, bim!”

The next moment I had risen too, turning a pale and dumfounded face towards my agitated companion, for a cry of intense human terror broke the silence, or, rather, left behind it a momentary silence in the wood. The birds ceased to twitter, the grasshoppers to chirp. The squirrels paused in the very act of springing. My blood curdled in my veins; my heart’s beat was silenced. The leaves, falling one by one around us, died without a rustle.

It might have been a phantom cry, it was so faint, so far off, and never once repeated. It was the very whisper of a cry—in no wise an appeal to man, but only one to God.

Then my heart sent forth its curdled blood, rushing wildly to the surface; my brain began to dimly comprehend the approach of a crisis; and my body to straighten and nerve itself for an attack. Something of the brute pleasure which comes to men at such moments came to me, filling all my veins with a quick, pulsating joy, like the animating and inspiriting sound of martial music. Instinctively I followed Moppert’s example, tore off a stout branch from a neighboring birch, and, stripping it of all extraneous leaves and branches, formed it into a by no means despicable weapon.

Yet my idea as to who my adversary was—whom I was going to fight—was as vague and indefinite as if I had been acting in a dream. I only knew, somehow, that there was somebody to thrash, and that I meant to thrash him with a vengeance. The brute instinct to fight was uppermost in me for the time, heated to intensest fury by a fire lit by love.

“Follow me, *mon ami*,” said Moppert, in the low, passionate tones of profound excitement. “I had composed myself to hear a confession, now I must fight for one.”

He led me by a winding path—for he knew every foot of ground upon the hill, having had ample opportunity of explor-

ing it during my illness—to a spot where, hidden behind a mass of thick, bushy undergrowth, we could see and hear what was going on without being ourselves discernible. We had crept as noiselessly as deer-stalkers or savage Indians. We stood now as motionless. For we both saw, at a glance, that there was no immediate danger.

Then I knew why every drop of blood within me had been eager for the fight. That is to say, my brain knew it. My body had known and vibrated to it at the woman's cry.

I grasped my rough instrument of chastisement with fierce delight. He had insulted me; he had foully wronged Moppert. Here, in the lonely wood, he should pay the penalty—a penalty which every honest man is justified in inflicting on a scoundrel.

CHAPTER XXXII.

HE AND SHE AGAIN.

“C'est un exemple à fuir, que celui des forfaits.”

CORNEILLE (*Cinna*, Acte 3, Sc. 1).

THERE are past scenes in most lives which have been so indelibly branded on the memory that when they recur it is with a vividness almost more intense than the reality. Not only are our brains at such moments endowed with abnormal power: our bodies, our senses, our nerves—spurred into intense emulation—acquire abnormal power too, step far beyond their ordinary limits, and perform prodigies. Such supreme moments are, of course, supremely rare. Should they occur often, our overstrained faculties would lose all their elasticity and grow limp and powerless. We should have to pay heavily for the short period of apotheosis, by subsequent mental death.

I have only to shut my eyes, and I see it all again; every leaf, I think, and every flower. There is a tiny green lizard, creeping out from under the fallen leaves; he is evidently intent on making a meal of the heedless, bright-winged insect hovering near him. There is a fly, a stinging one, on Moppert's clenched right hand. I see a boat below us on the lake, its white sail gleaming in the sunlight. I see a Lämmergeier hovering high

over us, a dark patch on the sapphire sky; I am sure it is a Lämmergeier and not a hawk. That is an unknown fern, to me, nestling yonder in the hollow—Mabel and Aileen used to collect ferns; I'll get a bit of it. What a glorious fritillary! how exquisitely soft and downy is the rich, variegated brown of its wings! Woodruff scattered thickly under our feet: in seed and scentless now, but how it must have perfumed the wood in the spring! What a clever fellow Moppert is! we can look through this break in the brushwood as through a window; see without being seen. Thus sight rambled on, and drew its inferences, independently of me; for soul, its rigorous master, was elsewhere.

The other senses were equally alert. Hearing, perhaps, the keenest of all. The "bim, bim!" of the bell from Schwyz, on the other side of the hill, just removed from silence. Every breath, every movement, every rustle in the wood spoke to me—loud, clear, distinct, pregnant with meaning; Moppert's smothered breath and my own throbbing pulse so loudly, that I wondered they did not turn to look whence the sound proceeded.

They—for though my quickened senses seemed to hear and see and have knowledge of everything, as if they had absorbed into themselves a hundred others, my soul was conscious but of *them*; saw and heard and felt *them* alone.

He and she again; looking intently at one another as I had first seen them on the promenade at Lucerne, and once more in the phantom boat. And I shall see them like that from time to time in the mirror of my memory till it is broken—his beautiful lips white with passion, hers with terror.

Like a helpless bird fascinated by the basilisk gaze of the serpent, she sat motionless, her violet eyes dilated and fixed on his; her right hand still mechanically grasping some brightly tinted leaves and scarlet berries; her white lips, not trembling, but asphyxiated, under his burning and imperious gaze, which seemed to scorch and consume her power of resistance—to awe even the fibres of her body into submission.

The cry we had heard must have been uttered when he surprised her—which he evidently had done. Now it would have been impossible.

He stood opposite her, his right hand slightly resting on a walking-stick he carried, his grandly chiselled face in profile,

his magnificent figure, standing at graceful ease, thrown out into strong relief against the glowing background of warmly tinted leaf and azure sky and emerald water. He wore no uniform to-day, but was simply attired in the conventional gray costume of the tourist; possibly to avoid recognition or notice, though his beauty made him so conspicuous an object that he would have been a marked man anywhere. No gray insipidity of color, no shapeless cut of garment, could mar his beauty, as no uniform could make it. Every one of his movements—now full of voluptuous ease, now passionate and excited—was as graceful as that of a young leopard, his splendidly moulded limbs as supple. The rich coloring of his complexion, instead of suffering by the contrast with the rich tints of nature, seemed enhanced by them, as if for the first time seen to absolute perfection in that glorious setting.

I was forced to acknowledge—hating him as I did—that as a perfect human animal, nature's masterpiece, he bore away the palm, even when subjected to this severe comparison surrounding him—bore it away without a struggle. But it was the devil, not God, who had breathed into him the breath of life.

He spoke first. At the sound of his musical, seductive voice I started so violently that Moppert laid a warning hand heavily on my arm:

"So thou hast tried to escape me, Käthe," he said, his full lips curling, his sharp white teeth flashing threateningly through them; "thy brain is well developed for a feminine one; there is no lack of sense under thy golden curls, as well as no lack of obstinacy; but *die Einfältigkeit selbst* must have taught thee to believe that thou couldst do that."

I saw her sweet white lips momentarily convulsed, as if she were trying to speak. But no sound issued through them. The shudder which ran through her slight frame was his only answer.

"Dost thou think," he continued, "that I would leave my most precious treasure unwatched and unguarded? I am always with thee, Käthchen, in the body or in the spirit. For thou art, though thou wouldst deny it, a part of myself, as I am a part of thee. Thou hast my love always. I gave it thee, freely, when I first set eyes on thee—dost remember it, Käthe?—under spreading trees, as now, in the palace forest."

"If I remember it?" she gasped. "Oh, if I could forget!"

"I thought I had loved before," he said; "thought the quickly fading passion I had felt for other women was love, and had learned to hate the very name of it. I was wandering through the dark forest all alone, killing beautiful living things in order to kill Memory. But Memory would not die. She showed me all her hideous records, till my brain reeled, and Desperation seized me for her prey. I raised the muzzle of my gun, and pressed it to my maddened brain. I laid my finger on the trigger. If there were no other road to Lethe, I—young, rich, handsome, a prince, a ruler—I must seek it *thus*."

She must have loved him, for I saw her arms stretch themselves involuntarily towards him, as if to save. He saw it, too, and smiled.

"See'st thou, Käthe! Thou hast taught thy lips to perjure themselves, but the rest of thy body throws back the lie to the false tongue, and passionately asserts itself against the misguided soul that would govern it. The color has faded from thy eyes at the thought of *past* danger to me. It is a sign that I shall triumph. To-day I shall wring a 'Yes' from thee after a thousand 'Noes.' To-day I shall carry thee back with me to repent of thy obstinacy on a bosom which never forgave living thing before, save thee."

I nearly sprang out of my ambush; should have done so if he had touched her. But the impetuosity of his forward movement had been but the mechanical yielding of the body to the passion of the soul. He had evidently resolved to exhaust argument before resorting to force. Only when he should attempt the latter had we a legal right to interfere.

"Let us go back in thought, Käthe," he continued, gently, "to that first morning when we met—thou and I—in the solemn pine-wood, where the tall, brown, branchless stems stood around us like cathedral pillars, forming endless avenues, while leaves from many a bygone year lay thick under our feet. The carriage sent to meet thee had missed thee, somehow, and thou wast walking to thy new home in the palace with a Hungarian lad for thy guide, who had chosen for thee the lonely, though certainly shorter, cut through the forest. Dost remember it?"

"Yes, oh, yes, yes!"

"The cold muzzle of the fowling-piece had touched my throbbing temple, for life with that incessant wailing memory along

with it had grown too horrible to be endured. If the carriage had met thee that morning, my Käthe, or thy Hungarian guide loved forest shade less, thou wouldst never have seen the man before thee, but, perhaps, as a senseless corpse."

Again, with an irrepressible shudder, she half extended her arms. Again, smiling, he continued:

"But Fate willed it otherwise, *Geliebte*; Fate had not made me what I am to die before my prime. She sent a lovely hand—thine, my Käthe—to do a work too hard for me: to kill implacable Memory, and Desperation, her latest born. I stayed my hand for a moment, angry at the interruption; then forgot my fell purpose in watching thee.

"As thou camest onward, at first only a tiny bright speck at the extreme end of one of the dark, stately avenues, all converging towards me, I fancied the very sunbeams above the mighty trees were all enamoured of thee, for, whenever it was possible, one of them was sure to creep in to nestle warmly on thy golden hair."

His voice had sunk almost to the tone of self-communing. In looking at the past, he turned his eyes away from the present. She sighed and moved slightly, with an evident sensation of relief, while the violet came back into her raised orbs, deepened by a tear. His gentleness alarmed me more than his anger. I began to doubt whether her heart could resist it.

"Thy hat was in thy hand, Käthchen, and thy fair hair fell unconfined around thee; thy cheek, usually a little pale for one so young, was flushed by warmth and exercise; now and then I saw thee stoop to pick up a fallen cone. Every one of thy movements was full of an indescribable grace—not the studied grace of our court ladies, taught by a dancing-master; only Nature had been *thy* mistress. Consciousness of self had never come near thee, my darling; the blushes coming and going on thy round young cheek were not painted by her. Thou hadst made acquaintance with Pain; I saw that in the gentle pensiveness of thy brow, the gravity of thy innocent mouth, which not even the brightest smile could quite dissipate; but she had laid no sully-ing hand upon thee. For once cruel Pain had come, not to rob, but to endow grace."

His gentleness, the fascination of his pleading voice, made me tremble from head to foot. If my heart were softening under it, how much more must hers!

"Thou camest on through the lonely wood, my Käthe, like an embodied innocence. Thy sweet presence calmed even me, and stayed my intention. The fowling-piece fell from my hand.

"Thou hadst not seen me yet, Käthe, hidden as I was behind a tree-stem, the dark gray and green of my shooting-costume harmonizing almost completely with the tints of nature; but now thy guide's more practised eye caught mine, meeting his frowningly, and he stood still, petrified with terror, probably knowing that he had sinned, and conscious of deserving punishment.

"I sent away thy guide, Käthe—one of my people; he had been poaching, doubtless, and his undiscovered crime and my frown together were too much for him. That night he hanged himself in the forest. It had clamored for a sin-offering that day, and accepted the servant for his lord. What, can the death of a base boor affect thee like that?"

"Oh, it is horrible, horrible, horrible!" she said.

"*Beruhige dich, mein süßes Lieb.* Thou henceforth shalt govern my people, and my judgments be tempered by thy mercy. Nay, thou must not turn from me. I am sorry. See, I, Prince Eberhard von Pöbeldowski, never said that before to any mortal on earth or to any God above. I am sorry. I will repent. I will love my people for thy sake. Think of that! think of the good, the happiness that will result from thy consent. Oh, I know thee, Käthchen! I was foolish—mad, to try and coerce such a woman as thou. I have not been taught patience. All my life long I have said, 'I will,' and everything has yielded. Have pity on me, Käthe, have pity!"

She was in an agony of weeping now, her slight frame convulsed. I looked pleadingly at Moppert, but he shook his head still.

"*Weine nicht, mein Liebling,* or, rather, weep on until that frozen, implacable 'No' in thy dear eyes is dissolved forever. I let my untried patience break where it should have been strongest, and frightened my timid bird. Men are not like women, Käthe; their passions will not always obey the curb. But women—some of them—are angels, and know how to forgive. Forgive me, Käthe; I have retied my patience, and the knot will bear much now; will bear any strain but one—nay, comtesse, that is the one thing it will *not* bear. I will not suffer thee to turn from me.

The blue veins upon his forehead, from which he now vehemently flung the straw hat, swelled almost to bursting as he spoke. The desperate struggle between passion and self-control was grim and fierce, but the latter, though with trembling hands, kept the reins still. His voice, when he could make it audible again, was gentler, tenderer than ever.

“Thou wast not afraid of me that morning in the forest, Käthe, nor shrank then from my presence. Thy own heart was thy teacher, unbiassed by prejudice, unpoisoned by base words of calumny. Men are not women, as I said before, and very narrow-minded must be the woman who would measure them by *her* standard of right and wrong. *We* must learn to be good, Käthe, by sinning. How can we detest pollution without having waded in some measure through it? Let thy heart be *my* judge, Käthe, and *thine*. I submit to it. I will bow to its decree.”

“Oh, my heart is a traitor,” she sobbed; “my heart is false to me.”

“No, Käthe, it is true as gold. Trust it, and all will be well. Bless thee for those words, my treasure! Let me take thee back with me into the pine-wood, and we will fancy ourselves there again—the simple voice of nature, and our own unfettered impulses, our only arbiters—the great world outside, with its misleading and mischievous teaching, nothing to either of us. No suspicion clouded thy fair face when I dismissed thy guide and offered to conduct thee myself to the palace. The Hungarian lad had done homage to me as his lord and prince, and at first there was some fear in thy timid greeting to thy master; but ere long thy look of awe changed into a shy look of pleasure. I soon got thee to talk to me, and learned all thy previous history by one or two simple questions. What was it, Käthe? I have forgotten the story; hardly listened to the words of the song, so matchless was the voice trilling it. Something about a dead father, an unhappy home, a hard stepmother who had made escape from that home like release from a prison, and a few bright hopes for the future. Thou hadst suffered, Käthchen, and thy song, my bird, was very plaintive, tremulous, and unsteady. But soon in the new and unaccustomed sunshine it swelled into a gladder key, and thy tender heart peeped out of the dreary convent where it had been educated, to sun itself in

the ripening light of love. Thy blue eyes looked up into mine as fearlessly as they had looked into the guide's, but differently too. When turned on him, though very gently, they had commanded; now they sued."

Oh, I had reason to fear for her! With inimitable skill, with matchless art, he was playing on the chords of her too susceptible heart, and every quivering nerve responded.

"And they did not sue in vain, my Käthe. I walked by thy side only as a protector, the yearning of my heart as pure as thine. There was no lack of *Würde* in thy matchless *Anmuth*, and where dignity and grace are combined, the woman rises above the man's level and is stronger than he. Every word, every look, every movement of thine revealed the inborn lady, that man-subduing element in women which even a queen may be without. Thy *Anmuth*, even more than thy beauty, attracted me, as the butterfly yonder is attracted by the sweet scent of the flowers; but thy *Würde* held a shield before thee, an impenetrable one, which has resisted all attack, and kept me in perpetual check until now. I knew at the beginning of our acquaintance that, if I would win thy pure heart, I must win it innocently, and I vowed to do so. I would make compensation to thy sex for the wrong I had done them by unceasing goodness to thee."

The very stones might have been melted by the pleading pathos of his voice. Even Moppert's inflexibility seemed to falter. A perceptible tremor passed through him. The Prince continued:

"Was it wrong to lead thee farther into the wood, to determine to linger to the utmost in the first absolutely pure companionship I had ever known? Yet I never touched thee till thy foot stumbled against some obstacle, and thou, of thy own accord, put thy hand upon my arm. Oh, the magic of that touch, Käthchen! The magic of a touch which no man, even the most blessed, ever feels but once."

I could not help echoing his deep sigh; and I think Moppert echoed it too. The tears of his beautiful companion had ceased to flow, and she sat listening to him in a momentarily deepening trance. I feared she was lost; and I feared, too, that we were losing the power to help her.

"We passed out of the pine-wood into an adjoining one of

oaks and elms and stately beeches. Thy hand touched a bramble-bush; the tender skin was torn, and bled. I led thee to a pond I knew of to wash away the tiny blood-drop. The color had left thy cheek, and I moistened thy face with water. I rent my handkerchief in twain to bind up the wound; I have it still, the torn morsel, stained with thy blood.

"We bent together over the water, thy hand as confidently in mine as if we had been two children to whom passion was but as the murmuring voice of a placid ocean far away, the fury of its storms yet undreamed of; we gazed enchanted at our own marvellous beauty, dimly reflected in its dark depths. What a pair we were, my Käthe! made, believe me, made for each other! I had read Ovid's 'Metamorphoses,' and wished the gods would change us, too, into something that would exist for centuries—me, into the strong-limbed oak; thee, into the green ivy twining round it."

"If they only had!" she said.

"They reserved us for something better, my Käthe—for a life together as man and woman, husband and wife. Yes, *Geliebte*, as *my wife*, whom even the miserable world thou art so foolish as to dread will delight to honor. If I cannot get the emperor's consent—and I shall, for thou art a countess of Mandelsloh, inheritress of a name as ancient as our own—I will let my present heir take the succession, and exchange the power I sinned so fatally to obtain, exchange it gladly for love."

"Your wife!" she said, looking at him with a roused and altered expression, not of pleasure, but surprised indignation. "Your wife, Prince Eberhard, when—"

"When I have foully sinned against thee, by encouraging the world to think differently. I was mad, Käthe. I have suffered, sinned enough to make me so. That was one of my means of coercing thee. But I have learned two things since then. I have learned that thou canst not be coerced, and also that I cannot live without thee. And I let thee go, at the suggestion of the *Schenkmädchen*, with the assistance of the *verfluchten* Frenchman—whom I will punish yet—to show thee that *thou* canst not live without *me*. My spies saw thee and them in that boat of Josef Aufdermauer's, though midnight darkness encompassed you. Now, my Käthe, I have conquered; is it not so? Thou wilt come back to me of thy own free will. And I will not

even tell thee that I forgive, in the completeness of my forgiveness."

"I dare not! I dare not!" she gasped.

"'Dare not.' Oh, woman's love is the most despicable thing on earth if it will not dare so little for its own sake. 'Dare not,' when thou art daring to drive me back on desperation. Nature, which made in thee for once an almost perfect creation, body and soul, could not leave out that *verdammt* *Eigenschaft des Weibes*, that supremest folly of woman, which impels her to strain man's endurance to its utmost limit—to try how far she may dare. *Nehmen Sie sich in Acht, Comtesse*—take care! I have not learned to be patient."

Passion had got the bit between its teeth now, and the reins in the hands of Self-control were useless; but Passion, as if afraid of its own liberty, still went softly. His face had lost its rich color and was ashen gray as he continued:

"Thou alone, *Geliebte*, hast seen me weak—weakened by the strength of my love, and it is not wonderful that thou shouldst like sometimes to show thy power. Women, even the best of them, are childish enough to enjoy tormenting those they love, but with men it is different. We bring all our forces to bear upon one thing, Käthe, and distraction irritates us beyond endurance. Love, to you, is either business or amusement; with us it is passion. Thou hadst nearly driven me to hurt thee, and when a man, forced thereunto by keenest suffering, hurts what he loves, the pain he inflicts falls back upon himself again like an added curse. We cannot enjoy giving pain, as you do. When we hurt what we love, we suffer most."

He stopped, looking at her—the passion, still restrained in action, flaming out of his eyes.

"Let it be enough, Käthe. In the lives before us thou wilt have ample opportunity for the exercise of thy power. To-day my patience is worn away to a thread so fragile that another tug must break it. And if *thou* dost not fear the consequences, *auf meine fürstliche Würde, auf meine Ehre als Prinz und Offizier—I do.*"

He had advanced towards her while speaking, and now her face was white as death, and she fell forward in a deep swoon. But her last conscious effort was to repulse him. The "No" he had so fiercely contended against died away only in the

silence of unconsciousness. He might break but never bend her—never conquer the indomitable soul.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

AN INEVITABLE ROAD.

“Sed omnes una manet nox,
Et calcanda semel via lethi.”

HORACE, *Od.* i. 28.

BUT now another cry ran through the serene quiet of the wood, mingling itself discordantly with the myriad gentle whispers which make up nature's silence; and this time no feeble woman's cry for help, but a war-cry from men, awakening all the echoes.

Moppert's restraining hand had withdrawn itself when she fell forward, and now his command to advance was obeyed by his fiery adjutant almost before it was uttered. At the moment when we broke through the brushwood, I was conscious of nothing but the fierce delight of warfare, my blood dancing within me at the elevating certainty that I had found an adversary worthy of my steel.

Sudden and unexpected as was our appearance, it found the prince not wholly unprepared. The ever-watchful instinct, the undaunted courage of the true soldier, must have been an integral part of his nature in spite of all his wickedness—wickedness which on account of its very excess raised him above contempt, placed him upon a pedestal of crime, and forced you, looking up, to do involuntary homage to the grandeur of the terrible. His face, so violently agitated but a second before, grew hard and cold as iron. The smile hovering round his mouth changed instantaneously into the haughty sneer of contemptuous recognition. No shadow of either surprise or fear modified the intense virulence of the conscious hate with which he honored the implacability of the two enemies before him. For he knew us.

With the most admirable self-possession he gently laid the lady on the sward, stooped to pick up his fallen walking-stick,

and advanced towards us. The supple ease of his movements—that rare combination of strength with lightness which arises from the perfection of proportion—ravished my eye in spite of myself. A prince of darkness he was, maybe, but nevertheless a prince—his patent of nobility given him by Nature.

“You have disturbed me, gentlemen,” he said, courteously—the courtesy of defiance. “Nevertheless, since you are here, we may as well settle our accounts with one another. A step or two farther back, if you please. It is hardly *en règle* to fight in presence of a lady, though, fortunately, she is at present unconscious. What have you to say to me, *mon capitaine*? *Il faut commencer avec vous. Vous êtes l’aîné. Vous avez bien le droit.*”

“That lady,” said Moppert, quietly, “is under my protection. I will spare you the trouble of further attendance on her. That is all.”

“A very comprehensive *all*, *mon capitaine*—an ‘all’ that does you credit. Much courage may be packed into a very small parcel. Your legs are short, *mon petit monsieur*, but what matters it when your courage is so tall and so fiery? Never mind, I will help to cool and reduce it. Did you enjoy the process so much last time that you are eager for more?”

“You will not irritate me into abandoning my purpose, prince. Be sure of that.”

“Are you going to summon the universe to be your witness, as you did last time we met, monsieur? That was rather a fine bit of acting, by-the-bye. There was a spice of real tragedy in it. The actor who can make every muscle in his body subservient to him has undoubted talent. I have seen worse acting bring down a Vienna house. Pity the motive was such a paltry one—the death of a dog.”

He laughed, watching the torch of anger lighting up in Moppert’s eye.

“But you are gathering your forces, perhaps, for another tragedy, *mon capitaine*. Tragedy must be your forte. You are a son of *la gr-r-r-ande nation*. You need a deal of thrashing to teach you humility. You have recently had a dose which ought to satisfy you, but there is plenty more of the same sort; *wuch-tige Deutsche Hiebe*, smart English slaps with the flat of the sword, the stinging lashes of Austro-Hungary.”

Still Moppert was silent.

“*Pour moi, j'ai eu assez de tragédie aujourd'hui.* I have been having a private rehearsal, and it has exhausted me. I am weary of it. What do you say to a change, monsieur? Human nature demands change. Let us finish up with comedy—a screaming farce. We will act together this time, monsieur, and your companion there shall be our audience. We will call it: ‘The Whipped Hero.’”

Up to this moment I, too, had kept silence, following the tacit command of my beloved leader, but this was too much for me. I started forward, uttering an indignant exclamation.

“Ah,” said the prince, pretending to recognize me for the first time, “it is the young English chanticleer, burning with emulation to win his spurs in the sacred cause of friendship. It is touching. I feel almost tempted to break out into those world-renowned lines of Schiller’s—

‘Ich sey, gewährt mir die Bitte,
In eurem Bunde der Dritte!’

only I have the sense to see that I should be a very incongruous element.”

“I am not so long-suffering as Monsieur le Capitaine,” I said, fiercely.

“No, sir, you are English, not French. You make a devil of a noise, and do nothing. ‘Kikeriki!’ that’s your note, sir, on the top of every foreign dunghill as well as on the tops of your own. And in the meantime the dunghills flourish amazingly, and other nations, hearing your impotent cry, look at you and laugh. Gradually, and almost imperceptibly, the lion’s roar has changed into the bray of an ass. Never fear, sir, you shall get your caning when the proposed farce is ended.”

Saying which, he suddenly shifted his walking-stick, called out to Moppert, and I became spectator of a desperate struggle. As they closed with each other my friend had commanded, loud and clear:

“No interference, *mon ami*; let me do it alone.”

How or when I became a factor in the fight I cannot tell. I found myself, somehow, straining every sinew in my system to hold a pair of struggling hands; and blows were falling heavily on a human body, now mine, now his, vaguely recalling to my

mind old Eton days, when proud boys endured, stoically and in Spartan silence, martyrdom under the name of discipline. I was in no sense of the word a free agent, only one working wheel in the complicated machinery of circumstances, driven to action by an overpowering force beyond and outside me.

Then the ever-shifting kaleidoscope of brilliant colors arranged itself afresh. The prince had wrenched himself free from the iron grip with which we held as we chastised him. I now distinctly saw his white face with its gleaming eyes of fire opposite me—a terrible centre to the odd shapes of intensest color which were grouped around it. Above us arched the autumn sky, higher and bluer than I ever remember to have seen it before; behind were tall forest trees, their golden foliage sparkling in the vivid sunlight, and standing out like giants among the younger and more tenderly colored wood below. I saw the muzzle of a pistol pointed at my heart; knew why he chose to kill me before Moppert; and had no more power to move than if I had been petrified.

Then the flash—the little puff of smoke—the report, which ran from hill to hill in thundering echo.

But, O merciful God! it was not I who fell; it was not my life-blood which oozed slowly out of a deadly wound. Moppert had brought the last, the supreme, offering to the altar of friendship—he had laid down his life for me.

The birds' sweet song, momentarily checked, went on again as joyous as ever; the Geier's flight, delayed for an instant, continued with unfaltering wing; the water's fair face dimpled anew with smiles; the busy insects buzzed and hummed and chirped with undiminished ardor—all of them deaf, blind, and senseless to the great human drama enacting; while I knelt upon the grass beside my dying friend, powerless to help him.

Powerless, for already his face was contracting to the death agony.

Then my soul rose up in fierce rebellion against its maker. I arraigned God on his throne before the fallible bar of human justice. I cried out in the intensity of my heart's despair: "If this is thy mercy, this thy right, I will have none of thee. Thy decrees are monstrous in their cruelty. We *cannot* bear them."

The blasphemy of this thought was, I trust, I pray, drowned

in the flood of tears which burst from my burning eyes. And now I became conscious that Moppert was speaking.

"Is that you, *mon ami*?"

"It is I."

"The curtain is falling thick before me. I cannot see earthly things. I cannot see your face, my boy. But I can see—"

He stopped, gasping for breath.

"*'C'est à moi que la vengeance appartient, je la rendrai, dit le Seigneur.'* *Cher ami*, we have been trying to do his work, and this is his answer."

Again he stopped, painfully trying to push back obtrusive Death for a moment.

"I must tell you one thing before I go, *cher garçon*. I have been a mistaken guide. I see it now. I was wrong."

"Oh, my friend! my more than father!"

"You must not avenge my death, dear boy—promise me."

"Oh, ask anything but that!"

"I see things in a clearer light than you now—in the divine light of death. Promise."

"I do! I do! My life, you have purchased it. But this is harder than death."

"You were going to confess. It is—late. It is night—*Je suis trop fatigué*—I must sleep."

I bent low over him. His voice was now but a feeble whisper.

"*'O Dieu, sois apaisé envers moi qui suis pécheur.'* What does the bell say?—Confess—to God."

After a pause he added with great difficulty:

"Always do the—right—however hard."

The next words were inaudible; I had to read them from his quivering lips.

"Kiss me, my boy. Take my head upon your breast."

I raised his honored head and laid it on my bosom. I pressed my lips to his paling ones. I bedewed his face with my tears. His breaking eyes opened wide; his lips were smiling.

"If I had ever had a son—"

Then, joyfully and loudly:

"*Gracieuse, ma petite, sois tranquille! C'est moi.*"

As he spoke the last word, Death laid a gentle hand upon his mouth and silenced it on earth forever. The great, the inscrutable mystery lay upon my heart—the terrible separation of

spirit from matter was witnessed by me for the first time. Love and light and friendship had gone out of the body they had made so inexpressibly dear to me—the mortal frame that had held the soul of a hero soulless once more.

Let me pass over the next few weeks in silence. They were among the most terrible of my life. During them I was exposed to the fury of a wildly tossed ocean; the one spar I had to cling to—Moppert's parting words: "Do the right, however hard"—as often as not submerged and at the last gasp with me.

For, many a time, my own conception of right waged furious war with the promise he had extorted from me. Not avenge his death! The not doing it, the not devoting my whole life to do it, often seemed to me even more despicable than perjury to a dead friend; and the two conflicting emotions almost rent me in twain.

During the conflict, though her spiritual presence was ever near me, the personality of Thérèse was all but forgotten. Love drew modestly into the background of my heart, putting on sackcloth and ashes for my dead friend.

Then there came a lull. I resolved, not knowing what else to do, to do as I had been bidden. And when I clung, like a timid child, to the skirts of Submission, came the divine command, "Let there be light."

"Do the right, however hard." Oh, it was very hard to leave my maiden, without even a parting word, a parting embrace; but the compass-needle of duty pointed steadily to the north—to Ballyacora Hall—where dwelt an old man who had a right to be consulted before I acted, because, whatever else he had failed to bestow, he had given me existence.

I resolved to take the countess with me. The princely murderer, in escaping from the scene of his crime, had left her behind. She had succumbed to her terror and her grief. I had to wait for her recovery. The passionate wish of a few weeks ago had passed into fulfilment, bringing, as every fulfilled wish does, also its trouble. Henceforth the burden of her life was upon my own.

She wanted to go to England; as soon as she was able to see me she told me that. She had relatives there—or, at least, one relative, with whom she hoped to find a refuge.

This relative's name—a singular contrast to her own grand-sounding one—was Smith—a certain Mrs. or Miss Smith, who, some twenty years ago, had been living in London. This was the clew by which we had to seek her.

And, remembering the noble army of Smiths which enriches our fatherland, I with difficulty suppressed a whistle of dismay.

“Do you think we shall find her, monsieur?” the countess asked, wistfully, raising her blue eyes to mine.

I replied that I was determined to do so; for her face was pale and her eyes heavy with unshed tears, and I would not have cast a shadow of discouragement over her for the world.

“I have a little money,” she continued, more cheerfully—“about fifteen hundred francs. It is very little, but perhaps it will suffice until we find her.”

“It will suffice,” I answered. And inwardly I bent my back to the new burden.

“It is only right,” she continued, her fair face flushing, “that monsieur should know a little more about me than he knows at present. He might perhaps, otherwise, think of me as an adventuress.”

“Tell me what you choose, comtesse, but I ask to hear nothing. You need no justification.”

“I will tell you all,” she answered, “if you will have patience to listen.”

And there, in the little *salon* of the primitive Gasthof in Brunnen, the beautiful countess told me her sad story. I did not know then how intimately her life was connected with my own, even before our memorable meeting in Lucerne. I know now.

This story, part as she told it me, part as I heard it afterwards from different sources, I shall now proceed to narrate.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

IN SCHLOSS MANDELSLOH.

“Though the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small;
Though with patience he stands waiting, with exactness grinds he all.”

Translated by LONGFELLOW from FRIEDRICH VON LOGAN.

It was in Saxon Switzerland, not far from the beautiful city of Dresden, that Katherine Ludovica Théda von Mandelsloh first

became conscious of life. From out the confused and misty memories of early childhood two or three pictures still stand out prominently, painted in vivid colors by pleasure and pain.

Behind these pictures, forming, as it were, their ever-shifting background, rise visions of sharply cut hill-tops, piercing a deep-blue sky; broad meadows and narrow vales at their base, through which rivulets foamed and fretted or broad streams flowed eagerly in their onward striving towards the sea. Stately forest-trees—now bright with the fresh green of spring, now red, golden and russet brown—grew around and among them; and thick and dark pine-woods filled the evening air with their spicy odor.

For sounds there were the tinkling bells of the cattle; the *Jodeln* of the herdsman; the deep bay of the hounds; the gentle ripple of the rivulets; the love-sick song of the nightingale; the croaking of frogs in the marshes; the oncoming sough of the hurricane; the roar of the cataract; the whir of the spinning-wheels; the stern voice of the house's master; the gleeful songs of the maids; and, sweetest and best-remembered of all, the gentle voice of the mother.

And these sights and sounds sank into the heart of the child and became a part of her.

Very early, too, came the knowledge of superior rank. Little Käthe knew almost before she could speak what it meant to be a Countess of Mandelsloh. Whether romping amid the fragrant hay with the maidens, or sitting poppy-crowned on some broad shoulder among the reapers—whether gathering with numbed fingers snowdrops for the *Mütterchen* or wandering bareheaded among the roses, she was ever conscious of superior dignity. And even when tripping by her mother's side to the village church amid the sweet chiming of the bells, and smilingly returning the salutations of the common folk, she would keenly notice any omission on their part and proudly resent it.

For, was it not in the natural order of things that the peasants should labor for the high-born? Were they not created to till the ground for them, and face for them an enemy's musketry? Was it not *her* home—the still stately *Schloss* on the hillside, its turrets gleaming white against the dark background of the woods, and looking down, even in its ruined splendor, forever looking down on the humble homes of the people? These things seemed to her the natural sequence of immutable law.

For how could she know of the mighty change going steadily on in the hearts of the down-trodden people? a change destined to shake to its very foundations the so-called rights of the high-born!

The household consisted of the master, the now rather feeble Graf von Mandelsloh; his daughter, little Käthe's mother; one man-servant; two maidens; and last, not least, a noble boarhound, called Ino—the child's sole playfellow.

Of her father Käthe knew nothing. On the few occasions when she had spoken of or asked about him, she had been instantly silenced even by her gentle mother, and once so sternly by her grandfather that she had not dared to mention him again.

And now comes one of the pictures painted so vividly on her memory—painted there by humiliation and pain.

Part of the castle, now so pitifully reduced from its former grandeur, was quite in ruins. To this part Käthe had been forbidden to go, but, childlike, she longed all the more ardently to do so, for what is so attractive as the forbidden? Already, accompanied by Ino, his conscious tail between his legs, she had tasted the delights of disobedience, and as yet Retribution was in abeyance. But Retribution only bides its time.

They used to sit there, the child and the dog, both equally conscious of wrong-doing, listening to the cry of the owls, or starting in terror from the bats, or watching the curious creeping things, battenning on decay, which crept out of chinks and crannies in the ruins, looking at them bolder than they, conscience-stricken, dared look back. And these creatures—the offspring of corruption—seemed to say—at least the child fancied so—"Your time has come and gone; the turn is now at us, little *Frölen*."

It was on one of these occasions that Ino, starting up from a doze by the side of his little mistress, uttered a furious bark, instantly strangled by his perfect consciousness that he must not bark in that place. Then Käthe became aware that a stranger had approached them, and was gazing at her with a look of interest which terrified her exceedingly.

The little countess never forgot the appearance of this stranger. He was very beautiful, far more beautiful than any one she had ever seen before, and though his face was strange to her, yet it

was somehow familiar, too. It was like some other face—whose she could not say, but it was one she knew well.

He was tall, this stranger, and his figure was gracefully, although powerfully, moulded. But what the child noticed most was the beauty of his golden hair and bright blue eyes. The expression in these eyes repelled and attracted her at the same time. And when he smiled, she felt a strange tremble at her heart, as if something had touched it that had a right to touch, awakening a long-lost echo.

But Ino was not attracted. His bark had subsided into a low growl of fierce defiance, and his teeth were displayed, and he stood there, ready to tear the intruder to the ground.

“Send the dog away,” said the stranger. Trembling and frightened as the child was, she felt constrained to do as she was bidden. She bade Ino return to his kennel in the courtyard. But the dog, accustomed to obey her every sign, refused to go, absolutely.

“Take him away,” said the stranger, in a sweet, melodious voice, wholly dissonant to his words, “or I shall kill him.”

Käthe, again awed by the same strange sensations, took Ino by the collar, and was leading him away when the stranger called after her.

“Come back again, you. I want to speak to you.”

He spoke with the easy confidence of one who was sure of submission, and sat down carelessly among the ruins, waiting.

Käthe, trembling, led the dog back to his kennel and chained him there. But this occult power, stronger than her own will and desire, forced her to return and stand alone before him.

She was not used to stand thus, while another lay on the ground at her feet. Poor and almost ruined as was the high-born house of Mandelsloh, its traditions still lingered. Nevertheless something stronger than her pride kept her where she was, awaiting his pleasure.

His pleasure seemed to be to keep her waiting; to test to its utmost the strange power he felt, and she felt, he had over her. Then he said, carelessly and smilingly—with that same smile that made her heart throb again—“You are a good girl, little one. At all events, they have taught you to obey.”

“They? What did he mean?”

As if he had read the unspoken question in her dilated eyes, he answered it:

"The old fool in yonder, Graf Mandelsloh, and his too-submissive daughter."

"They are my mother and grandfather," answered the child, strangling the sob in her throat.

"Are they fond of you?" he asked, abruptly, with that same strange smile, so bright and yet so heartless, which fascinated while it repelled her.

Fond of her? Käthe had never asked herself that question, nor could have answered it. They were hers, and she was theirs. The same pulse throbbed in their veins; the same proud, passionate, yet intensely loving heart beat in their bosoms.

"They are my mother and grandfather," she repeated, falteringly, and now the great tears began to fall.

"Ha! Yet thou art not like them, except for thy haughty carriage and that proud and defiant look in thy blue eyes. Little aristocrat, knowest thou not that your time has come and gone, and that the turn is now ours?"

He was repeating the very words she had heard the lizards say, and the bats, and the creeping things about the ruins. Was he too born of corruption?

"Thou art going to be beautiful," he continued, using the form of address of an acknowledged superior, and, now rising and looking down, his shadow fell upon her. "Very beautiful, I should say. Well, little one, they gave thee rank, but they did not give thee beauty. And to-day rank is doomed. Trust to the beauty, little one; there is safety in that."

Käthe neither understood nor could answer him.

Suddenly he stooped and took her in his arms.

"Kiss me, little one. Nay, do not turn away thy head. I am fond of thee too, and soon thou wilt be fond of me. I am going to take thee with me."

"Nay, do not struggle," he continued, looking down smilingly on her agonized efforts to escape. "Soon thou wilt love me, and I am going to save thee from their fate. Besides, this too will be a punishment—a short prelude to a greater punishment hereafter."

But now the spell was partly broken, and Käthe's wild scream had rung out into the air before he could stop it with his hand upon her mouth.

A moment later, and, half unconscious, she heard Ino's furious bark and the lash of a horsewhip. Then Jörg, their sole retainer, was beside her, and her grandfather had her in his arms again. She was saved, and the mysterious stranger gone.

That very afternoon a stout ancestral rod—always hung, a perpetual warning, by the side of the rarely used *Kamin*—was put into requisition, in spite of the tears and entreaties of the mother. For Kurt, Graf von Mandelsloh, Freiherr von Oberhusen, Büttel und Franzensheim, never forgave disobedience, or left to uncertain fate a punishment which his own strong right arm could administer.

And this is the first picture which stands out in the countess's memory, eternally *al fresco*, painted there by terror, pain, and mortification; the mortification greatly enhanced by the commiseration of the maidens and tender-hearted Jörg.

The second picture is painted in livelier colors, and sunshine from a cloudless sky streams upon the canvas.

It was *Hochsommer*, and the limes, heavy with blossom, filled the air with fragrance, while a few nightingales still warbled their love-songs among the foliage. And it was Jörg's wedding-day.

Linda, one of the maidens at the *Schloss*, was the happy bride, and the little countess thought that anything more lovely was nowhere to be found.

Her embroidered bodice was tightly laced over an ample bosom, harboring nothing but good-will. Her long flaxen hair, well oiled, was tightly braided. Her round blue eyes twinkled perpetually between smiles and tears, and her plump cheeks were as red as peonies—almost as red as the ribbons which fastened her hair.

She wore a short, narrow petticoat, hardly reaching to her knees, and revealing garters, wonderfully embroidered, on legs that would have done honor to a Scotch Highlander. Upon her head, gorgeous and indescribable, sat a crown fit for a queen. Nobody but an *Altenburgerin* could have worn it without suffering martyrdom, but Linda was used to carrying heavy pails of water on those fair plaits of hers, and could dance you a jig into the bargain without spilling a drop.

The countess always remembered the walk to the village church through the crowd of admiring spectators, and the intoxicating scent of the limes.

"They always smell strongest before a storm," some one whispered, and Käthe looked up to the serene blue sky, with wonder at the remark.

There was plenty of laughing and feasting and dancing and merriment that evening in the usually silent great dining-hall of the castle, and it might have been only the little countess's fancy that she saw scowling brows, and heard muttered menaces through the music.

It was her own little mother who carried her to bed that night.

"When shall I be married, my *Mütterchen*?" the child asked, while the countess plaited and brushed her thick golden hair.

"God forbid that thou shouldst ever marry," said the lady, pressing the child's head to her bosom, upon which a hot tear fell.

"Why do you weep, my little mother?" asked the wondering child. "Does marriage hurt, like my grandfather's *Birkenruth*?"

But the lady only wept more and did not answer, and the sandman came and weighted the child's eyes and ears till she could neither see nor hear.

Now for the third and last picture in the old ancestral *Schloss*.

Käthe was too young to notice how her grandfather's health was failing. She only remembered how querulous he grew, and how anxious for news from France. She only remembered how he used to sit there muttering, while her mother grew paler and paler.

Sometimes the old count would seem to confound the grandchild with her mother, calling her Théda, her mother's name, and summoning her to his side.

"I am only Käthchen, grandpapa."

"Käthchen? Who is she? It was a boy I wanted, yet I grew to love my daughter above all things. She was the apple of my eye, *mein Herzblättchen*. Ah, she is lost to me!"

And he would sink into reverie, from which he would rouse up furious, cursing some one for having thwarted his desire.

"To marry him, the base-born foreigner! Go! I know thee no more."

Then he would add proudly:

"But he acknowledged the claim. For more than once I

stood between him and death. Once in the grand-ducal forest in Sachsen Meiningen, when I rushed between him and the infuriated boar. Once again, when I received the ball levelled at the monarch."

And he would add:

"Forget the other name, my Théda. It is thine no longer. For he, *unser gnädigste König*, has granted my request for thee and for thy heirs. Thou wilt remain Countess of Mandelsloh. I have the royal letters patent."

All of which the child could not understand, but infinitely dreaded.

The red sun was slowly sinking in the west, and the evening meal over. And now Jörg and Linda brought out the spinning-wheels for the evening task. The old count had supped heavily, for the supper had consisted of his *Leibgericht* — *Puffer* (potato-cakes baked in oil and served hot and crisp), salad made from the celery-root, and stewed plums from the orchard, gathered and dried in the autumn. He was now lying on the *Kanape* at the far end of the hall, breathing heavily and stertorously.

"Go and kiss the dear hand of thy grandfather, my child," said the grave Countess of Mandelsloh. "I will take thee to thy rest."

The whir of the spinning-wheels made a sort of dreamy music, which mingled not discordantly with the deep breathing of the old man upon the couch; and outside, Ina's deep bay was heard from time to time. The child never forgot the mingling of these sounds and the sensations they awakened. And now the maids began to sing:

"'Sgibt nur 'ne Kaiser-Stadt,
'Sgibt nur 'ne Wien."

Alas, how heavily it had nearly cost them, that leaning of Protestant Saxony and her Catholic king towards the soft, sensuous arms of demoralized Austria!

"Now, my *Herzchen*," said the countess, ceasing her spinning, which she had been doing with two hands at once, unlike the maids, who only span with one; while she moistened her thread in a basin at her side, they using a handier moisture, afforded by their own mouths. "Now, my *Herzchen*, thy time is up."

Thine too, gentle little lady, thine too, on earth !

For what were those shadows on the floor, thrown there by the rising moon ? And what was the meaning of that loud cry from the maidens ? And now Ino's fierce, furious bark died away in a howl of mortal agony.

The child had no time to scream, for her mother's hand was on her mouth, and her mother's sweet voice was saying resolutely, "Remember that thou art a Mandelsloh, little Käthe." And now the thickening shadows grew into stalwart men, and stood armed around them.

They were all peasants from the village. Käthe knew them all, yet knew them not, for they were strangely altered. They bowed no knee before the *Herrschaften*, nor stood aside to let them pass. They had been recreated since yesterday. They had become men.

Men like unto themselves.

The old count—a moment before weak, helpless, and almost unconscious on the *Kanape*—rose to meet them as quietly as if they had only come at his summons to receive "gracious punishment." His glazed and dimmed eye grew bright and keen, as he drew himself up to his magnificent height and stood facing them.

One of the troop, a huge peasant, advanced towards him.

The child never forgot the look on her grandfather's face as he stood confronting them—one against a hundred. The velvet cap had fallen from his white head ; a wonderful light irradiated his massive features ; his lip was defiantly curled.

And he seemed to say : "This is the work for which I was born—to suppress such as these. Let me die with my foot in the stirrup."

"What is the meaning of this, Johann Faullenzer ?" he asked, haughtily. "Has he forgotten the time, long years ago, when he was brought before me to be chastised ? Do his scars want renewing ?"

"It is forty years ago—just forty years come Martini," answered the man, with almost aristocratic dignity and sternness, "since you—you, Graf Mandelsloh—sentenced me for a thoughtless, foolish act—nothing more—to be tied up and lashed."

"He has a good memory," answered the count, as coolly as if no hundred armed men—armed with the weapons of revolt,

flails, hoes, spades, rakes—stood behind; “it is exactly, as he says, forty years ago.”

There were muttered curses to be heard as he spoke, and the men behind pressed hard upon their leader, while a humpbacked cripple, mounted upon the countess’s spinning-wheel and armed with her basin, made as if he would have hurled it at the resolute white head of the speaker.

Johann’s big, bulldog face paled a little. The old count proceeded:

“Could he not learn the lesson taught him? Does he want it repeated?”

“It has been learned, Graf Mandelsloh. Ay, and taught to others as well. And we are come here to-night—that’s what we are come for, Herr Graf—to reward our teacher. *Gott hab’ ihn selig!*”

“*Gott hab’ ihn selig!*” repeated the others. And the cripple in the rear laughed, a shrill “He! he! he!” of scorn and mockery.

“I was then only twenty years old, Graf Mandelsloh, and had been taught that I owed love and obedience to the *hohen Herrschaften*. I was willing to learn. I owed them no grudge then. And I was in love with a maiden. We were together in the wood, and I had hurled the stick at the hare which crossed our path more for frolic than aught else. And for that, Herr Graf, you condemned me to the lash and to the dungeon.”

“*Wilddiebe* must be punished,” said the old count, somewhat uneasily.

“*Freili, freili*, Count Mandelsloh, and *Bauernmädel* must die. Aennchen drowned herself, foolish *Dirne*, in despair at my disgrace. And my love and respect for the *hohen Herrschaften* were turned to hate.”

The old count was silent.

“A drowned *Bauernmädel*; *ein unterdrücktes Volk*; a whipped *Bauer*; what is that to the *hohen* and the *höchsten Herrschaften*? Will it poison the wine they drink or harden the couches on which they repose? But the eyes of the peasant are opened, Herr Graf, and he knows now that he has no need to submit. The sun which has risen blood-red over France is rising over us too; the bugle-note sounded there has raised a hundred echoes all over Germany.”

"He ought to know, knowing so much," said the count, "that the cellars in Schloss Mandelsloh have been drained dry long ago, and that our *Feldbett* is harder than his own."

"Knock him down, Johann!" shrieked the cripple. "Tell him that in another hour the Red Cock, the banner of the people, will be seen far and wide, floating from the turrets of Schloss Mandelsloh. Hurrah! the harvest is there, and Johann, sickle in hand, at the head of the reapers."

Then there was an onward rush, the old count still standing erect as long as his granddaughter could see him.

After this the picture grows confused and dim. The countess seems to remember seeing her mother rush forward, her long, soft, brown hair floating around her, and seems still to see her gentle head upon her father's heart.

But Jörg was holding her, so that she could not follow.

Then cruel voices around her cried:

"*Mach' ein Ende zum ganzen verfluchten Geschlecht!* kill the brat too!"

And finally, the vision of a man, beautiful as an angel, with bright hair, golden as wheat when it is ripe unto harvest, and a voice saying:

"If any one hurt a hair of the child's head, he shall answer for it with every inch of his life. The child is mine."

And after that nothing more. Except the fancy that she was back again among the ruins with Ino by her side, and crawling, creeping, wriggling things looking at her and seeming to say: "Your time has come and gone; it is our turn now, little *Frölen*."

CHAPTER XXXV.

LOUIS L'ANGLAIS.

"La tache de notre propre cœur est comme le miroir du mal en nous; plus elle s'étend, et plus le miroir devient complet."—SAINTE-BEUVE.

"Der Schmutz ist glänzend, wenn die Sonne scheinen mag."—GOETHE.

THE next few months of her life little Käthe spent in a sort of trance. Many strange and terrible things seemed to pass before her, but always as if in vision.

The usual course of things was bewilderingly reversed ; bustle and fierce gayety came with the shadows of evening, and morning sunshine found her companions prostrate and inert. The child's life in Schloss Mandelsloh had been always partially overshadowed by a cloud of mystery ; but this new life seemed darkness and mystery itself.

The man who had claimed the little countess as his own after the murder of her mother and grandfather was the same mysterious stranger whom she had met in the ruins. He was strikingly beautiful, yet his beauty, while it fascinated, also terrified her. This man bade her call him father.

"Come and kiss me, Käthe," he would say sometimes, drawing her to his knee, his hot lips redolent with that *eau-de-vie* which was his favorite beverage. Then, when she shrank from him, he would add, laughing :

"Little aristocrat, when the cursed folly has been driven out of thee, thou wilt learn to love me."

But he never ill-used her, nor allowed another to do so in his presence. And when he was absent she would slink into a corner, like a timid dumb animal, conscious that it is only allowed to live on sufferance.

After many a weary night's journey—they never travelled by day—they arrived at last in a great, turbulent, storm-tossed city, which Käthe afterwards learned was Paris. There they halted.

Besides the man who called himself the child's father, and who, as she learned afterwards, really was her father, were two other men, dark-haired, close-shaven, and fierce-eyed. Of these men she felt afraid, although they rarely noticed her, mostly passing her by in sullen silence except when she was in their way. And then they would push her aside, as if she had been an insensate log, with a muttered curse.

There was also a woman, and she, too, was dark-haired and fierce-eyed. This woman was the object of Käthe's most supreme terror, for she instinctively felt that she hated her—hated her because she knew that she was in some sense a rival ; that she possessed influence where this woman wanted to reign alone.

The child used to wonder, watching this woman from the corner to which she had retreated, whether she were beautiful, or

what it was that made her father, otherwise so imperious, so much under her influence.

She had great, bold, flashing eyes, varying in color with the emotion dominating her—she was always in a passion of emotion—now they were of a bright hazel, now vivid green, now blood-red, and anon black as their pupils.

These eyes met men's unabashed, and, combined with full red lips, large white teeth, a supple and graceful body, and a Parisian aptitude for dressing in the style most becoming to her, made up a curious whole—singularly distasteful to the refined taste of the child, but apparently very admirable in the eyes of the father.

Not but what they quarrelled often, and that most furiously. Mademoiselle de Laffolie was made up of emotions, and without the daily rage and the daily reconciliation would have died.

And the man loved nothing better than to rouse these emotions, laughing cynically when the devils he evoked tore and rent her.

They were a strange pair, these two. Sometimes the terrified child witnessed horrible scenes between them. Occasionally the passionate words of the woman would rouse her companion's wrath, and once roused it knew no limit. He would beat her cruelly.

At other times he would caress and fondle her, and then to please him she would caress and fondle the child, calling her "*petit ange*," and the like, and declaring she was the image of her father, the most beautiful of men.

"I love her like a mother, thy little one, Louis," she would say, clasping the child to a bosom perfect in contour, though hard and bony to the touch.

"But how sweet is thy tongue, Hortense," her companion would answer, sneeringly, even though his head, maybe, was resting on her lap.

And he would add, with that strange smile of his, which hurt and charmed in almost equal proportions:

"Drink a little more wine, *ma belle*, and change me into a scoundrel, whom thou wilt murder yet, and the little one into a devil who merits the guillotine—by the by, not a bad escape for the victim of thy caprices. *Vive la guillotine!*"

They drank together. But the woman's eyes were flashing and her sharp white teeth clenched.

"*Vive la guillotine!*" he repeated. "Is not she our milking cow—our adorable benefactress, by whose aid we will mount—thou and I, Hortense—to the top of the ladder?"

"Thou wilt mount that ladder one day, verily, and return no more," she answered, fiercely, her humor changing as he had predicted.

"Nay, *mon ange Parisien*, my good-luck is proverbial. Nevertheless, I will accompany thee thither and take a moving farewell from thee at its foot. In the meantime may it live and flourish!"

He raised his glass high as he spoke, and seemed, or would have seemed, as brimful of enthusiasm as the glass was full of wine. Yet his words left behind them a cold and slimy trail like that of a serpent, and the concentrated light from his blue eyes fell full upon the face of the woman like the dark light of a policeman on the watch.

"Drink," he said, "drink, *ma belle amoureuse*."

"*La petite* shall drink also," said Hortense, rapidly, seeking out a victim for the rage consuming her.

"*Assurément*," he answered, coolly, pouring out a third glass. "Come hither, Käthe. Drink and shout—say it in thine own tongue, child—*Die Revolution soll leben! Die Guillotine hoch!*"

But Käthe burst out into loud weeping, and with an impatient "Bah!" he pushed her from him. The child returned, sobbing, to her corner. She had caught a red gleam, the danger signal, shining out from Mademoiselle's eye, and she knew its meaning. The sins of the fathers are eternally visited upon the children.

Meanwhile in Paris, the passionate heart of the Continent, the Revolution raged, sending forth from its fiercely palpitating centre fresh streams of maddened blood into the long stagnant veins of Europe. If there had been one man, only one, equal to the crisis; capable, not of stemming—that was impossible—but of directing the bloody course of the current, Europe, revitalized, might have been saved.

But there was not one prince among the rulers capable even of standing upright amid the rush, no Gideon among the people. Princes fell prostrate. Petty German electors bought a momentary safety by yielding where they should have stood firm,

as they had hardened themselves when they should have yielded. Prince William of Prussia fled from Berlin. Ferdinand of Austria abdicated. Louis Philippe had fled to England at the first note of alarm, aided by the passports of a Mr. Smith.

"With the passport and under the name of Mr. Smith," said Käthe's father, slapping the cheek of Mademoiselle de Laffolie, and in radiant good-humor. "Now, I warrant thee, Hortense, thou wouldst never guess how I, chief among his enemies, learned that so early."

"Who told it thee?" she inquired, keenly watching him—her eyes narrowed and intent.

"Who told it me, *ange céleste*?" he repeated, slowly, watching her, too, with those brilliant eyes of his. "Come and kiss me, and take that for thy answer. I am told many things, *moi*, but I do not repeat them to a woman. Women were made to caress, but never to confide in. The man who confides in a woman is the most arrant *baudet* in the world."

"And the woman who believes in a man," retorted Mademoiselle Hortense, fiercely, "might as well put her head under the falling knife of the guillotine."

"Thinkest thou?" he replied, coolly. There were times when he loved nothing better than to excite this woman to frantic fury. "Then don't believe, Hortense."

And he added, with that maddening smile of his:

"Thy head is too handsome to feel the guillotine yet. Wait a while, till I am tired of thee."

"*Ingrat !*" she said, but she said it gently, for he had drawn her to his knee and was smiling as he caressed her; "where wouldst thou have been but for me?"

"Somewhere, doubtless," he replied, with a yawn; "I'm not particular. I've a trick of falling on my feet; and I've a trick that's worth two of that—I know how to manage a woman."

After this manner they would quarrel and make it up again, Monsieur l'Anglais (by this name he was known to the dark, secret, close-shaven men who came to confer with him) playing with this woman the double game he played with the people and with the sovereign—with danger and with death; and he played it unto the end.

For Louis l'Anglais was nothing more than an unscrupulous adventurer.

There was not much good in Mademoiselle de Laffolie, but there was one great virtue. She could love, and he could not. Although many a time he treated her worse than a dog, she clung to him with all a dog's fidelity. More than once she held his life in her hand.

But she bore with him, forgave him, until the final offence which struck at the root of her one virtue and turned the fountain of her love into a deadly poison.

Even then she shared his fate, dying upon his bosom.

The storm-tossed hearts of the people had finally beaten themselves numb against the iron barriers forged by wealth and power. They grew quiet at last. New voices, loudest among them Monsieur l'Anglais's, were heard in the streets and in the faubourgs. *Vive Napoléon!*" succeeded to, and finally overpowered, "*Vive la Révolution!*"

So it was that the fruit he lusted for ripened under the sunny sky of France, and when the ex-prisoner of Ham landed at Boulogne, it was with a sigh of satisfaction that many a weary heart in the capital heard of the eagle which had flown to meet him and settled on his head.

"An omen from above," they cried, for Paris longed to feel the pressure of a firm heel again. She had had "*assez des révolutions.*"

"It is a sign from above, Hortense," Monsieur l'Anglais had said, forestalling the people. "*Vive Napoléon!*"

"Thou wouldst cry, thou, '*Vive le bon Dieu!*' if Satan ceased to be of service to thee," answered Hortense. "There is not a drop of true blood in thee, Louis. But what about the bacon in the prince's hat?" she continued, "and who tamed the eagle?"

And she laughed, the hysterical laugh of a wounded heart.

But why follow the details of this ever-recurring strife? Soon the little countess, by the mercy of God, was removed into a healthier atmosphere.

The *coup d'état*, which speedily followed the proclaiming of the third Napoleon as President of the Republic, raised Louis l'Anglais to a very different position. He no longer lived in a remote street, but in the centre of one of the great boulevards, where Hortense, now called Madame l'Anglais, "entertained" to her heart's content.

Nay, more than this. For some unexplained service Louis

l'Anglais was ennobled by a grateful emperor, and received the title of Comte de Grise. He had worn gray on the occasion when he met a greater adventurer than himself on the pier at Boulogne, and had been jocularly accosted by him as Monsieur Couleur de Gris. Hence his title.

But poor Hortense never rose beyond Madame l'Anglais. Many of the greatest gentlemen of the new court came to her receptions, but the ladies accompanying them had nothing wherewith to reproach their hostess. She was to the full as honorable as they.

Now, as only child of the Comte Louis de Grise, and also, by virtue of royal letters patent, Countess of Mandelsloh in her own right, it became necessary to care a little for Käthe's education. She was sent to a convent school.

Fortunately the choice was a good one. The little countess received excellent teaching and made rapid progress. Several peaceful and happy years succeeded. And so she grew into a tall *demoiselle* of seventeen.

One morning she was hastily summoned to the Lady Superior. She obeyed without emotion. The current of her life had flowed so peacefully of late that the painful recollections of her murdered mother and grandfather and the horrible life she had led afterwards were partially obliterated.

It was a letter from her father which awaited her. It commanded her instant return.

With a trembling heart she obeyed. She had not seen him since she had left him for the convent. But with the proud resolution which was an integral part of her character, she kissed her companions, embraced the Lady Superior, and, accompanied by one of the sisters, returned to Paris. There the sister left her.

The Count Louis de Grise was alone in his grand hotel, lying upon a silken couch; his golden hair damp and tangled, his blue eyes bloodshot and haggard.

"*Tiens, que tu es devenue belle, ma fille,*" he said. "It is I whom thou resemblest, Käthe. Thy mother was dark and ugly."

"She was an angel," answered his daughter, roused by the strength of her love. And his cruel words did what the kind ones at the convent had failed to do—they loosed the iron bands round her heart, and she wept.

"Sit down," he said, disregarding her emotion. "I have something to tell thee. Last night I had a dream, but I did not dream that I was an angel—"

He broke off suddenly, and the thick drops stood upon his brow.

"Bah!" he continued, fortifying himself with a draught from a glass at his elbow. "*Qu'est-ce que c'est qu'un rêve? Träume sind Schäume*, as they say yonder in Germany. To be interpreted by contraries."

And he smiled. But his smile had lost its attraction and only retained its horror.

"Dost thou ever dream, Käthe?"

"Yes, my father."

"Didst thou ever dream that thou wast dead?" That all was over? That superior cunning could avail thee no more?"

"No, I never dreamed that."

"Oh, it was horrible. To be tied hand and foot, and know it was forever. To be conquered, not by skill, but by sorcery."

"Perhaps you are ill, my father. Let me stay and nurse you. I—I am your daughter; I have the right to do that. Let me stay and learn to love you."

"Thou, thou too?" he answered. "I knew thou wouldst learn to love me. They all do. They cannot help it."

And he smiled his old triumphant smile for a moment, but it speedily faded.

His daughter stood aloof, aghast that not one impulse in her tempted her to approach him nearer. He went on:

"I dreamed that I was dead, yet, though I was powerless to move, I could both see and hear.

"And I saw a woman standing beside me, a little woman with a face like mine and thine, only not so beautiful. And I could see right through this woman into her heart, and it was white as snow."

His daughter still stood aloof, gazing at him. And he trembled as he returned her gaze, seeming to see something terrible even in the frightened eyes of his child. He went on slowly, speaking as if in self-communing:

"Then I saw in the centre of that pure heart one bleeding spot. And I knew the hand that made it.

"She stooped over me, this woman, and said, in a low, sweet voice :

" 'Louis, now that thou art dead, give thy innocent child to me.' "

" 'What dost thou know about my child, Mary?' I said. For I knew who she was.

"But she did not answer me, and now a thick vapor enveloped her and hid her from my sight, and the spell seemed gone, and I could move again. Where she had stood something was lying on the ground, covered with a cloth.

"I drew off the cloth and looked, and it was an image of myself, the face white and ghastly, the golden hair red with blood."

The color had died out of his face as he spoke, and his eyes grew fixed and glassy.

"I forgot," he said, hoarsely ; "I forgot that I must die."

After this he rallied, and said, with an effort of gayety :

"I know what the vision meant. I am to be dead to thee henceforth. I am to send thee to her. And I will," he added, with a virtuous air. "Thou shalt make atonement?"

"Am I to go now, my father?"

"As soon as I can make arrangements. I must tell thee first a little about myself. I am going to be married. Canst keep a secret, child? And Hortense is gone ; she shall not ill-treat thee any more."

He said this as if he had made a sacrifice of her for his daughter's sake, playing the old double game even with his own soul. Then he added, hardly conscious that he was giving himself the direct lie :

"It is she who is dead. She grew old and ugly, child, and her tears wearied me."

He then bade his daughter fetch a casket from an adjoining table.

"See," he said, "this is for thee, Käthe. There are a few things in it that will be of value to thee. And it contains the address of the woman to whom thou must go. Tell her I sent thee."

"Where is it I am to go, my father?"

"To England. I was born there, in a dark hole of a place in London. I ran away. If I had not, I should have killed him. And I came here with a friend, who knew how to coin stones

into gold. He died on the guillotine. I die—no, live—as Comte de Grise. I was ever luckier than he.

“’Twas in Bad Elster that I met thy mother. I got into trouble there, and she saved me. They can’t resist me, the women. More than one has died for me. Thou wouldst too, child, if I strove to bewitch thee. But I don’t. *Par le bon Dieu*, I’d rather see thee turning from me as thou art turning now.

“Not that I love thee. Love—what is love! Did Thédas love me? Does Hortense? I should define it, I think, as a mixture of passion and extreme credulity, of which only women are capable, and which grows in exact proportion to the unworthiness of its object. I have tried to kill it often, sometimes out of curiosity, to see what the incorporeal thing could bear. Neglect is nourishment upon which it fattens; cruelty is its strongest stimulant; and to murder is to recreate it. Again and again I have seen it arise from a grave, full of new and vigorous life.

“The only love I know is something resembling remorse. The only wrong I repent of is that done to her. Others pretend to be good. She was good. But I give thee to her. Thou shalt atone.

“I married thy mother in Berlin. She was a great lady, and marriage was necessary—*comprends-tu*? Thou, too, wert born in the ‘Stadt der Vernunft.’

“But the old man was inexorable. Harborage for her and the child, but *guerre à outrance* with Louis l’Anglais. Well, he has had it. I’ve been his evil genius ever since. And now he is dead.

“I told them to save *her*. I did. And if Johann Faullenzer hadn’t perished in the *mêlée* he’d have died under the lash of my vengeance. Ha! I worked him up well for the heroics.

“I am tired. I have only another word to say to thee. Keep thy own title, it is thine. In that casket are papers containing the deed wherein the King of Saxony, in acknowledgment of thy grandfather’s services, allows the title, in default of male issue, to descend on the female side. I am but a creature of the new empire, and *it* will not last long. I heard strange things in Berlin when I was there as agent for the French revolutionists, and scattered broadcast over Deutschland’s *Auen* the seeds of anarchy.

“My mother was a Frenchwoman. There is a portrait of her

in the casket. I took it with me. It may serve for thy identification. I am to be married in a week, and then thou shalt go to England."

Here the count stopped, motioning to his daughter to leave him. She had been listening with ever-increasing horror, every fibre within her quivering from the intensity of her repulsion. Now this horror was deepened by a vague impression that some one else was listening too. The curtain at the head of his couch moved slightly; the air seemed suddenly suffused with sulphurous vapor. Almost choking, she hurried away.

The count sank back again upon his silken couch. He had talked away his fear and his remorse. His lips smiled. His blue eyes sparkled. His attitude was full of voluptuous ease.

The next morning all Paris rang with news of a great tragedy. In his own magnificent hôtel, Louis, Comte de Grise, had been found dead in the arms of a woman—a mistress whom he had abandoned.

Louis l'Anglais had learned that love may mean more than credulity and passion. It may also mean *death*.

After the state of bodily and mental incapacity which succeeded her father's death, Katherina, Countess of Mandelsloh, found herself almost destitute. Her father's goods were claimed by creditors. Her letters to London were returned to her by the post officials. She wrote to the Lady Superior of the convent where she had been educated, but she was dead.

It was then that, after much seeking, aided by a Monsieur de Laffolie, who assumed a sort of protectorship over her, she obtained employment as *dame de compagnie* to a Hungarian princess. And so she became acquainted with Prince Eberhard and learned to love him.

Learned to love him before she knew how impossible it would be for her tender conscience to sanction the love. And for Countess Katherina to love once was to love always.

She told me afterwards what was the meaning of that expression on her face when she turned and looked at me on the promenade in Lucerne. She had been struggling with her fate until, like a little bird in the snare of the fowler, she was getting worn

out with the struggle. Nothing seemed left but the cruel waters of the lake, and her young life shrank from that alternative.

"I had just been imploring God," she said, "to save me from a fate towards which everything seemed driving me—my own traitor heart foremost of all—when I lifted up my weary eyes, monsieur, and saw you. And from that moment I felt I was saved."

It was impossible to misunderstand her, even for the vainest of men. Her sweet blue eyes were full of unspeakable innocence and purity.

"You saw that your enemy had become mine too, countess, did you not? And that you might escape him while he was dealing with me?"

"Not exactly, monsieur. I thought I saw my father again, young, and good, and full of generous impulse. I should not have been amazed at a miracle, I was so full of passionate prayer for help. And, monsieur, you are wonderfully like him."

"And you, countess, are as wonderfully like a sister of mine. You remind me of her continually; only that she is as merry as a cricket."

"While I am dull and moping," she answered, smiling sadly. "Ah, monsieur, I have not had much to make me gay."

"You shall learn to be gay at home with Aileen," I said cheerfully. "And I mean to find this Mrs. or Miss Smith if she is in the land of the living. By the way, the name is something like my own. Suppose we are relations; that would account for these strange resemblances!"

Her face brightened. She looked at me with sudden hope, then shook her head.

"Ah, monsieur, such joy is not for me. But I will not repine. At any rate, I have found a friend."

And I vowed that I would find a home for her before making one for myself. But I vowed it silently.

The next day we started for England.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A SMALL HOUSE AT CLAPHAM.

"Woman's will may—*may* be broken
Is her husband only wise:
Let no useless word be spoken,
Reasons, theories, she'll despise:
All her logic springs from love;
Kisses—tears, her cause must prove."

Translated from BODENSTEDT.

IN due time, with an infernal scream and roar, our train rushed into the great terminus, and cast us out into the fog of London.

The countess clung to my arm, her timid eyes raised confidently to mine. From henceforth the burden of another's life—another's fate—was upon me.

I took her to a quiet, respectable hotel between Pall Mall and Piccadilly; then got a long, long sleep, and awoke full of vigor and resolution. Some orderly hand had been arranging everything in the chaos of my brain. I knew now what I had to do, and determined to lose no time in doing it.

First, then, I had to dress with unwonted care, for I was going to call upon a lady whom I was very desirous to please. I stopped in the street to buy a chrysanthemum for my button-hole, and smiled as I thought of the astonished eyes of Aileen.

For it was towards Clapham that I journeyed—at Clapham that I finally landed, my face flushing, my heart beating high with expectation.

At last I stood before a tiny house, distinguishable among its neighbors by the almost audacious masculinity of its appearance. For on its front was a brass plate, on which were inscribed these words:

GERALD MALCOLMSON,
ARCHITECT.

My first knock was unanswered. I knocked again a good deal louder—a regular rat-a-tat-tat.

I soon became sensible to my finger-tips—informed thereof by that sense within us as yet undignified by a name—that this unwonted summons had caused more than one neighboring curtain to be hastily drawn aside, and brought more than one pair of feminine eyes to be inquisitively fixed upon the stranger.

Then I heard the sound of approaching feet. The color rose to my cheek, and I began to tremble.

How is it that we are so awkward and embarrassed when we meet friends after long separation? It may be that a crowd of strangers could not discompose us, but one familiar eye can do it easily.

But it was not Aileen who opened the door, keeping it cautiously on the chain. It was a stranger.

I inquired for Mrs. Malcolmson—giving Aileen her married name with a singular sense of how far it took her from me.

“Missus was out.”

I inquired further, with a sinking, yet, somehow, relieved heart, for Mr. Malcolmson.

“Master, too, was out.”

At this crisis, with somewhat embarrassed impetuosity, I interposed a hand to prevent the door being unceremoniously closed in my face. The woman inside, no whit embarrassed, contemplated that hand with unconcealed suspicion, and appeared to wonder whether the law would justify her in squashing it.

Could she tell me where they were to be found?

Questioned one didn’t know.

Or when they would return?

Questioned one didn’t know that either.

My anger rose. My voice, too, rose a trifle with it as I said: “I am a relative of Mrs. Malcolmson’s. Open the door.”

Now, a decided command has this remarkable quality: it contains within itself both cause and effect. Speak as if disobedience were an impossibility, and I’ll stake my head you will be obeyed.

The woman drew back the chain sullenly enough and opened the door. I entered.

To the right hand of the Lilliputian passage, from which arose a flight of stairs, steep and straight as a ladder, was a door, slightly ajar. “I will wait for your mistress,” I said again to the maid with the same decisive peremptoriness; “in the meantime go about your business. I need not detain you.”

As I spoke, I pushed the door further open, and went boldly into the room whose entrance it guarded.

It already contained two living occupants, both faintly visible by the feeble ray of a solitary lamp which, half concealed under a green shade, stood upon a round table—the centre-piece of the tiny room; both also revealing their presence by certain sounds. A canary warbled a low song in the twilight obscurity; a human being gave slow utterance to the deep, regular breathing of profoundest sleep.

My audacity in thus forcing an entrance was getting punished already. Good heavens! what if I had got into the wrong house!

The maid was gone. I was left at my own command, to my own resources—an unhallowed intruder into a sanctuary!

I slightly shifted the shade over the lamp, letting its rays fall full upon the face of the sleeper.

It was that of an old lady, sunk low in an easy-chair drawn up before the dying embers on the hearth. Her hands lay loosely folded upon the knitting on her lap (not the gray stocking of Switzerland, but something soft and fleecy, ivory-white and rosy red), the monotonous color of her dark gray gown agreeably relieved by a snow-white apron, equally snowy muslin collar, and high-crowned Quaker-looking cap.

Now, old age, as a rule, is no beautifier. It dims the eye, sal- lows and wrinkles the once smooth skin, robs the bright hair of its gloss. Old Age, too, man-like, is harder on women than on men.

But it was God who had beautified the placid face before me. Nature—that wayward sculptress—had chiselled the features carelessly; the upper lip too long, the nose too short, the chin a trifle too massive. But love, and pureness of heart, and patient long-suffering, had made the face so beautiful that it looked almost holy as it lay there upon the pillow in the calm unconsciousness of sleep. The eyes had shed many tears—witness the deep rills which marked the course of their currents. Yet every line bore emphatic testimony to the beauty of the soul. The hand of relentless Old Age had faltered on approaching this woman; only with his lips had he touched her, and that like a lover, brightening the bloom upon her soft cheek with his kisses.

I looked and looked again, ravished, and could not choose but look. In my ears rang the echo of a long-forgotten lullaby. Upon my cheek burned kisses, like none that I had felt for years. Before my mental eyes rose a spiritual presence. Memory stirred within me, striking long untouched chords upon my heart, the deep vibrations of which shook me to my centre.

I went nearer. I knelt down before the sleeper. I examined her lineaments with the keenest anxiety. The hair, rebelling against the restraint of the cap, fell over the low, broad brow in well-remembered ripples. The wrinkled hands, softly sunk in the rosy web upon her knee, were like—oh, Heaven!—so like others, the firmest, the tenderest I had ever known. And—good God!—a drowsy bluebottle hummed in the high crown of her venerable head-covering.

At this final discovery, Memory, in agitated haste, poured a strong acid over words almost obliterated. Clear, black, distinct, they stood out before me: "Let the cruel thing that weaned a brother from a sister answer that."

I burst out into loud sobbing. I threw my arms around my dear, dear old nurse. I laid my head upon the bosom that had been my childhood's only and unfailing solace. I thanked God for his boundless mercy. He had taken my friend—my heart's father—from me; had given me instead my soul's mother once more.

"My dearest Charley, I don't like to mar our almost perfect happiness by scolding you, but a good housewife always has one eye on duty, and I really must, you know."

Thus, an hour later, Aileen.

Scene: a dining-room, five feet by four. That is to say, on consideration, it must be a trifle larger, but it really does not look so. Talk about cats, you couldn't swing a kitten in that room, unless it were a Manx one, without imminent danger to that kitten's brains. How a table has been got into it I don't know—perhaps by the same process that the apple gets into the dumpling. How a sofa—so fragile-looking that I wouldn't sit upon it for worlds—and various chairs got there is for me an impenetrable mystery. Perhaps the ceiling is movable, and they were let down. I look up at said ceiling with some alarm as this thought suggests itself, especially as an elephant is promenading above

us. I don't know how *he* got there either, but feel sure it must be an elephant, until Aileen, laughing a little, says it is Margery.

Third matter for contemplation: how did we four average-sized human beings get into, and how do we manage to live in, this room? I am, it is true, occasionally sensible of a constriction in the throat resembling suffocation, but I do not think it is from want of air. I suppose, too, I came in at the door, though now, looking back at it, it seems a physical impossibility. I might be anxious concerning my exit, only that as yet I have not the smallest desire to go. Yet this Euclidical problem—a very Asses' Bridge of difficulty—does occur to me: if the door was the tightest of fits *before*, what will it be *after*, tea?

For I am sitting at Aileen's board for the first time; my legs very quiet under the table, and also under strict injunctions not to move with any degree of abruptness. A general overturn, it is evident, would be the result of disobedience. Aileen is at the head of this table, pouring out tea. Aileen's husband is at its foot, cutting up bread. I have Aileen's authority for asserting that he is his house's master and hers. I have the authority of my own observations and power of combination for asserting with at least equal tenacity that upon his neck is the foot of a little mistress. Never be ashamed of that, Gerald Malcolmson! Love is the greatest restraining as well as the greatest propelling power on earth or in heaven. I defy any learned professor of the British Association, though he be immersed in electricity and all the rest of it to his learned ears, to find me a greater.

Opposite me, on the above-mentioned sofa, sits my nurse, her face, like mine, bright with smiles—smiles so replete with emotion that at any moment they may return to their primeval source and become tears again.

"I really must, you know," says Aileen.

"Go ahead, Aileen," encourages her husband, as she pauses to shake her lovely little head at me; during which by no means alarming performance, her curls, now confined with a matronly comb, tumble in a golden shower about her. "He won't mind it. If he's like me, he'll rather like it."

"Like it, sir?—Take some toast, nursesey darling. I made it myself—soft for your poor old teeth. You can't live on your boy, you know. Gerald, you neglectful creature! call *yourself* a host! don't you see Charley—half starved, no doubt, poor,

dear fellow! in those barbarous foreign countries—is eating nothing? Kipperred herrings, dear? I never heard of them till I was married, but they really are mo-ost savory. *Like it!* You'd like, I dare say, to see me wasting away to skin and bone with useless reprimand."

"I shouldn't like it at all," says her husband, laughing, and looking admiringly at her plump little figure, "but, fortunately, at present there are no symptoms."

"What, sir! do you mean to tell me I'm getting fat? I'd Banting myself directly if I thought there was the remotest probability of such a catastrophe; or make you give me drawing-lessons again. Ah, Charley dear, you can't conceive how reducing *they* are! I hadn't been learning a fortnight before mamma's maid had to take in all my dresses. *Is* your tea as you like it, Charley? I take loads of sugar myself, but Gerald doesn't. Try some marmalade. Gerald dear" (anxiously), "sugar has risen a halfpenny in the pound."

This terrible commercial perplexity bringing a faint shadow on Aileen's smooth young brow, I seek to disperse it.

"When am I to get the scolding, little sister? I can't enjoy my tea till it is over."

"Ah, you don't expect to like it, then! That is right. When I scold people I want them to *mind* it; to be *hurt* by it; to *dread* it; to *tremble* in expectation of it."

"By Jove! it must be something awful."

"So it is. You may laugh, Gerald, but I read once, in one of mamma's novels, of the 'hollow laugh of terror and despair!'"

"Goodness!"

"No, sir, badness. Atrociousness. What do you mean by breaking into our house like a midnight thief, without so much as a note or a telegram beforehand to put us on our guard?"

"'Twas a long way from midnight, Aileen," I venture timidly to observe.

(It is odd how completely Aileen's marriage has turned the tables against me. I wouldn't venture to hector her now for anything, but it seems she may venture to hector me, and pretty smartly, too.)

"Stick to the point, sir, if you can. Gerald can't. Just the tiniest little slip of a false word, and down he pounces on it, as if it were the gist of the whole matter. Pray, *must* a thief

come *exactly* when the clock strikes twelve to be a midnight one?"

"No, Aileen, but—"

"No buts, sir—like a midnight thief, I say, frightening Margery to that degree that she shook after it (she told me so) like a 'hasping leaf.' I'm not botanist enough," continues Aileen, looking at her rosy finger-tips reflectively, "to know precisely what sort of leaf that is, but, anyhow, I'm sure it must be one that shakes terribly."

We laugh so uproariously at this that, I am sure, we must have alarmed the neighbors. I haven't laughed like that for months, almost years; but this happy, joyous home is doing me all the good in the world.

Aileen's rosebud of a mouth protrudes itself into an unmistakable pout.

"I dare say it's very natural for a man to make game of his wife's ignorance," she says, pretending to be vexed; "but, seeing he took her for better or worse, and knew what a silly girl she was beforehand—and I'm sure she never pretended to know anything—I think 'twould be more manly and more generous to stick up for her."

Her husband's countenance expressing the deepest contrition, Aileen springs up from her tea-tray, heedless of the capsized cream-jug, to stroke it caressingly, and lay her own rosy one forgivingly against it.

"He looks so ugly when he is cross," she remarks, in an explanatory tone; adding, as she returns to her seat, rosier than ever:

"Well, Charley dear, have you any excuse to offer for your misdemeanor?"

"Only this, Aileen, that I knew you would make me welcome at any time."

"That's a very pretty answer, for which I am sure Gerald will let me give you a kiss. There!"—giving it—"offence number one forgiven and forgotten. And now for number two."

"Is there another?"

"Certainly. A *much* worse one. Nursey, dear, don't look at me like that. I mean to scold him. He deserves no mercy. I'm sure he nearly frightened you to death."

"He didn't frighten me a bit," answers my nurse, smiling

faintly. "I had been dreaming of them both — my long-lost boys. And then I seemed to see them both—so much alike, and yet so different. Ah! will he ever come back to me?"

My nurse's voice has sunk into the monotonous tone of soliloquy, and from her eyes, directed downwards, one or two drops fall heavily. I look at Aileen, anxious and amazed. Aileen looks back at me, and slightly shakes her curly head again, a rosy finger on her rosy lips.

"Nevertheless, dear," she continues, "though, fortunately, as far as we can see *yet*, no *very* serious result is to be apprehended, it was quite enough to frighten her into fits. I don't approve of servants listening behind doors or peeping through keyholes *as a rule*, but I cannot scold Margery, under the circumstances, for keeping the house door open, her heart in her mouth and her eye at the keyhole, all the time you were there. 'Which, mem,' she said (she calls me mem, Charley, and is really a most invaluable servant, and *such* a cook, but not *quite* a Lindley Murray), 'which, mem, when I see him down upon his knees afore her, and she sleeping like a babby, I were that mortal certing that he was either a roaring madlam or a-going to wilful murder her, that I should have screeched myself mad too, only that the strength were took out of me in spasms.'"

Aileen offering no explanation of this extraordinary speech, I think Margery must have got confused between madman and Bedlam. This is simply a suggestion.

"I don't exactly know what she *meant*," continues Aileen, looking admonishingly at her laughing husband; "there's so *much* in Margery that she is hard to understand sometimes; but I know this, that if *I* had been taking an afternoon nap, and had awakened to find a man at my feet, I should have had spasms myself, or something quite as bad."

"I hope you would," says Mr. Malcolmson, promptly, "unless it had been I."

"'The verb to be, with all its variations,'" corrects Aileen, in triumph. "Ah, it isn't only poor Margery who is no Lindley Murray. Now, Charley, if you are *very* penitent, and promise never to do it again under *any* circumstances, you shall—"

"Have another kiss," concludes her husband.

"Certainly not. *My* kisses are not so cheap, as you'll find out next time you want one, sir; little enough you'd care about

them if they were—shall take me into the drawing-room, I mean. We *call* it a drawing-room, Charley, though it *is* so small. Gerald, you bring nurse. Stoop your head, dear, or you'll bump it. That's the good of being short. What a big, awkward fellow you are! And *who* told you to grow that love of a moustache? Quite distinguished-looking, but not twisted properly; it ought to curl up a little at the ends—just a thought, you know. Bear's-grease won't do it, you must get something sticky—I forget its name. Let me twist it, and fasten your necktie. Oh, the helpless creatures you men are, your fingers all thumbs, and never able to dress properly without a woman to help you! That's what you marry for, *I* think. There, now, with a new waistcoat and better-cut pair of—goodness! do you think I've *no* bones?—you may go in at an easy canter for the duke's daughter."

"I'll wait awhile before I do that, Aileen."

"Will you—are you—why do you look so proud, and yet so sad, Charley? That kiss was not for me, I know; it was meant for other lips, and burns upon mine like a confession. That look was not for me, either; it goes through me, passing on yearningly to some one far away. Your heart is not beating quicker at *my* touch, it is throbbing at the thought of another. Tell your sister, dear; she can sympathize, for she knows what it is."

"Not now. Some time, perhaps, Aileen."

"I've seen it in you all the evening, but I couldn't speak until we were alone. You went away a bonny boy; you have come home a bonnier man, my brother. Your smile is different. Your eyes have learned to weep."

As she raises her own blue eyes and chattering little mouth to mine I see a great change in her, too—the bud of promise expanded into a sweeter flower than I had ever anticipated. Our lips meet again as they never met before. Malcolmson is a fellow of sense; he lingers still behind us, while we, under cover of the solitude and passage twilight, indulge in the warmest of fraternal hugs.

We are again seated in the Lilliputian drawing-room. Aileen, upon a low chair on one side of the brightened hearth, listens now, as charming a little listener as she was a talker awhile ago. A silver thimble flashes brightly hither and thither in the

combined light of lamp and fire ; a steel needle accompanies it. She is making something too small and fine and flimsy to be intended as a garment for herself or her husband, or, certainly, for Margery. Perhaps it is a pocket-handkerchief, but I hardly think so. I vaguely wonder what it is, as I sit watching her sweet, now grave, little face, upon which the flickering firelight throws strange lights and shadows. She is greatly changed. I see it plainly now. A new earnestness on her brow, a new light in her eye, a new tenderness in her smile ; the girlish gleefulness tempered by the wife's gracious dignity. I see a tear sparkle in her blue eye, slowly roll unheeded down her cheek, fall gently upon the soft white material in her hand, and vanish there. It is not a tear of sadness—the proud, the tender smile trembling round her pure young lips destroys all fear of that. The sweet perfume of the opened floweret thrills my soul with gladness, and also with a passionate yearning.

My nurse, too, whose very presence in the room seems to fill it with a blessing, though she scarcely speaks a word, has—seated on the same easy-chair where I found her sleeping—taken up the rosy web again, and rapidly it spins and grows under her busy fingers. It seems to take a shape familiar to me. I am sure I have seen her knitting things of like fashion in the old, dismal nursery. Vaguely, still talking, I wonder for whom they are intended.

I tell my brother-in-law all about the fair countess. I answer a quick, inquiring glance from Aileen's eye with a smiling negative. I tell them—the women crying, both, in sympathy—the story of Moppert's love and loss. I speak of my long illness and its cause, and of the good man who saved me ; ask their advice and counsel concerning my beautiful charge ; but never once mention Thérèse—never once.

When I finally stop, Aileen stops too, gently puts down her work, rises, and comes over to her husband.

He draws her arm within his, and she rests her sunny head upon his shoulder.

“Gerald, dear !”

“Well, my pet ?”

“Our home is but a little one ; a very, very little one.”

“Has it grown too small for you, Aileen ?”

“No, no, no ! I would not change it for a king's palace ; but—”

"No buts, little wife. It is your own command."

"But—I must, dear—but it has a spare room in it."

"Yes."

"A tiny room—hardly fit for a great lady, but a pretty room, I think."

I begin to understand before he does. I look gratefully at my sister—eagerly at her husband. My nurse looks up too, and smiles approval.

"Go on, my precious."

"On the sunny side, Gerald. Such a healthy side, you know."

"Specially in a city where the sun *never* shines," he says, smiling. "Go on, my wife."

"Husband, dear, I never asked you for anything yet that you said no to."

"Which is an intimation that I must not say no now. Go on, my darling."

"Gerald, dear, while I was sitting there sewing, listening to Charley and to my own fancies too—"

"What, a tear! Nay, I cannot allow that, my wife."

"I fancied I saw a ghost—perhaps one from the churchyard yonder—looking in upon us."

"Nor *that* either, Aileen."

"A fair face like mine, only handsomer."

"Then it was a false face, for the thing is an impossibility."

"A fair face like mine, only paler."

"May yours never resemble it in that respect," he says fervently.

"A fair face like mine, only desolate, forsaken, friendless."

She is sobbing now, but what matters it? her head is on her husband's breast.

When she raises it, her face bright and smiling again, she has got her own way, of course, and the poor lady under my care has found a temporary home. It is in such manner that the women rule us—bless their tender hearts!—despotically. It is in such manner that they may ever rule us, if they choose.

But now it is time for me to go, even Aileen acknowledges that, unless I would become in deed and truth a midnight guest.

"Just wait one moment, Charley," she says, as I reluctantly rise, loath to leave the tiny paradise. "I *must* ask you one thing more first. Gerald, hold both your big hands before my face, for I know I shall blush."

He draws her head instead to its old resting-place.

"Did you, Charley—are you *quite* sure he can't see the least bit of me, Gerald?—did you get my manuscript?"

"You know I did, Aileen."

"And—and read it?"

"Every word of it."

"Good boy! And were you *very* angry?"

"I might have been, only just then all my anger was occupied with myself."

"Ah, you have been sinning too! I must hear about that another time. And did you—did you laugh? Gerald, throw your handkerchief over my head; I'm perfectly certain he can see my ears, they burn so."

"No, Aileen, I can't; besides, I'm looking the other way; and yes, Aileen, I laughed once or twice."

"And—and cry a little?"

"Hum! ha!—er—of course not! That is to say, do men ever—"

"That is to say, you *did*," she answers, with true womanly acumen, forgetting her own shamefacedness to enjoy the spectacle of mine. And now, if you've *really* made up your mind to go, and won't stay the night—though our spare room is a *lovely* one, and I think if you wouldn't mind curling up your legs a little the bed would be *quite* long enough—why, just give nurse and Gerald a good hug—no, I mean, shake hands with *him*, though *why* he should object to what *I* think rather nice I can't imagine. Gerald, *I'll* open the door for him, we don't want you; and I sent Margery to bed an hour ago—partly to save her from the temptation of listening, to which I fear she sometimes yields; partly, poor thing, to give her ample time to recover from her fright."

She *had* something else to say to me, then; I knew it.

But she only opens the house door and kisses me very tenderly—her kisses as moist now as in the days of old—and lets me pass out of the sanctuary of a happy home into the blank cheerlessness of the foggy November night without a word.

I have hardly taken two steps, though, before she is after me, breathless, to lay a little detaining hand upon my arm.

"You'll catch cold, my darling sister, and what would your Gerald say to me then?"

"Never mind. Charley, you are going to Ballyacora Hall?"

"To-morrow morning, Aileen, as fast as express train and boat will take me there."

"And you will see papa and mamma, and Mabel, and all the rest," she says, with a deep sigh I construe into regret.

"I suppose so. Would you like to go with me?"

"Ah, I dare not. Besides" (proudly), "I *would* not without him."

"You are sure you do not miss the comforts you have been accustomed to—that you do not regret—"

"Regret! oh, Charley, if you knew! but—"

"But what, my pet?" for she is crying bitterly, her head upon my arm.

"Charley, ask papa and mamma to forgive me. Plead for me."

"I have a cause of my own to plead with them, Aileen, but yours shall come first."

"That's my generous boy. I always knew you were not really selfish."

Ah! the selfishness has been driven out of me by keenest pain, and I know now that it is the highway to wretchedness.

"I don't want anything but their forgiveness," Aileen continues, raising her little head proudly again. "I was miserable in the midst of luxury. I am so happy now! Gerald gives me all I want, and it is so sweet to be indebted to him for everything. He is so glad to give, I am so glad—so proud to take."

"I understand, dear, and it is the right thing."

"But—not at first, more shame to me—only lately, I have longed to have them forgive and love me if they can. I have thought—"

She stops abruptly, trembling with emotion, and perhaps a little, too, from the raw, searching cold of the dark night. I fold her close in my arms, kissing her wet cheek and downcast eyes.

"Thought what?" I say, soothingly.

"That—if—if, in years to come, Gerald and I should ever have a little child, and it should turn from us—"

She has torn herself out of my arms and gone back into the light and love and warmth of Home before I can speak another word; but I walk along the deserted street, greatly enlightened. I see again the rosy web, and the bit of flimsy material, and the

rapid movement of dear womanly hands by lamp and firelight. The tangled web of vague conjecture is cleared away, and the neatest, dewiest home of cunning woodland spider, sparkling in the sharp light of sudden revelation, in its dusty stead.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A MARRIAGE AND A RENUNCIATION.

“Denn die Männer sind heftig, und denken nur immer das Letzte,
Und die Hinderniss treibt die Heftigen leicht von dem Wege.

* * * * *

Stehen, wie Felsen, doch zwei Männer gegen einander,
Unbewegt und stolz will keiner dem andern sich nähern,
Keiner zum guten Worte—dem ersten—die Zunge bewegen!

* * * * *

Aber ein gutes Wort verlangt er und kann es verlangen;
Denn er ist Vater!”—GOETHE (*Hermann und Dorothea*).

THE fog which has kept the puffing and impatient steamer long motionless in the Channel thickens into close and heavy rain as we slowly move up the river towards Waterford. I have been pacing the deck for several hours, driven thereunto by that inward restlessness which forces the weary body into sympathetic action, and mechanically listening to the monotonous commands, sonorously delivered from the captain's bridge, sonorously repeated by the man at the wheel: “Hard a-port!”—“Hard a-port.” “Starboard a bit!”—“Starboard it is.” “Steady!”—“Steady.”

“Ste-a-dy! Ste-a-dy!” How the words still ring in my ears, with that peculiarly distressing sensation of intense heart-and-body sickness which sea travelling, especially with a mind ill at ease, often leaves behind! “Ste-a-dy! steady!” All in vain the repeated command! The lumbering old vehicle conveying me from the city of Cork to Ballyacora gets deeper into the ruts every moment; my agitated heart beats with continually increasing irregularity the nearer we approach the long avenue of stately horse-chestnuts leading up to the Hall.

We pass the South Lodge, the great gates opening with creaking reluctance to let in the heir. Heavily and remorselessly the rain pours down upon the sodden remnant of shivering leaves

still clinging to the trembling mother branches, which moan out their want of power to hold them as the cruel night wind rushes headlong to the attack. A little bit of fraternal cursing and swearing goes on between the driver and the porter, the latter angered at the late, and apparently plebeian, arrival. The gates swing to heavily again behind us. I draw back impatiently into shadow as the light from the gate lamps streams searchingly into the coach; but it is too late, the porter has recognized me.

"Begor, and it's yerself, Misther Charrels," he says, touching his cap deferentially; "shure and it's the masther that'll be glad to see ye, the night. Ye're just in toime, sorr!"

In time for what? I wonder, as we drive on again.

But I have not much time for wondering. A few minutes more, and I am almost blinded by the glare of light streaming out into the darkness from the chandelier-illuminated hall.

The footman stands at ease, awaiting my pleasure. I, very far from standing at ease, decline to hand him the card he seems to expect, and turn wearily towards the library.

"Tell your master I request an immediate audience," I say, haughtily; "I will wait for him here."

The footman is new, and does not know me. He seems inclined to dispute my right to enter. But, disregarding his astonishment, I lay my hand upon the door-handle.

The subdued light in the library is very pleasant after the glare of the hall. I am about to sink into an easy-chair when I observe that the room is not empty. Two people—a lady and gentleman—look up with surprise and some indignation. I see two things instantaneously, while in the act of seating myself: first, that they are very close together—suspiciously close, his arm hastily withdrawn from toying with the raven coils of her abundant hair; then, that they are strangers to me.

Yet—the afterthought comes vividly—the lady's eyes, of a deep, dark, lustrous blue, are singularly like those of my German countess, only that the light in these is all reflected from without; not, like hers, only crystal windows through which the soul, now glad, now sorrowing, looks out upon you. And his eyes, too, never seen before in the flesh, are uncomfortably familiar to me in the spirit. I have already looked and shrugged mental shoulders at them, either in a picture or a dream. Fishy, cold, selfish, passionless, and yet sensual, they have no light at

all, or power even of reflecting any, except through a glass medium, covering one of them.

I am retreating with a low bow and a few words of not unembarrassed apology—for in this room I am so unmistakably *de trop* that to remain would be unpardonable—when the lady gracefully rises, revealing the outlines of a figure as perfect as that of any sculptured Venus, slowly approaches me, puts out a lily hand, cold and unpulsating as marble, shows a trifle more of two pearly teeth, always partially visible above the short and proudly curled upper lip, and says, languidly :

“How do you do, Charles? Papa will be delighted. Allow me to introduce my brother, my lord. Charles, this is Viscount Kilreeny.”

I cannot help wondering, as I look with compelled admiration into her exquisitely colored, calm, unflushing, profoundly self-conscious face, commanding the homage of the senses as a wonderfully chiselled piece of sculpture might, and also exciting as much desire as it might do to press her to one's heart, whether the gentleman beside her—he is a lord, so I suppose I *must* call him one—whether he has ever yet ventured to touch her scarlet lips with his. I only know that *I* don't venture. I bow a moment low over the beautiful hand with a somewhat emotional recollection of Aileen's warm, moist lips upon my cheek, and check the unmanly disposition to sob, and the untoward one to laugh, as I remember the noble viscount's own recorded words : “Now, a fellah likes warmth.”

I get a kiss, nevertheless, from somebody that night—accept and return it too, though rather shamefacedly. Not from my mother. The melodramatic performance with which we separated is repeated with even extra theatrical solemnity—we both salute the air simultaneously in her boudoir. Her maid, who is reading to her when I enter, watches the pathetic scene, not without anxiety. No wonder : dinner-time is approaching, and that wonderful effect produced by carmine, etc., can't be reproduced in a minute. But how old she looks in spite of it ! How painful the contrast between the raven curls and the wrinkles touching them ? How almost ghastly the perfection of the white teeth and the sunken nonconformity of the cheeks ! How unnatural the rose-tint on the prominent cheek-bones ! “Go and dress,” she says querulously ; “you are not fit to be seen—Rey-

nolds, proceed; I couldn't eat a morsel until I know whether Laura relents. Reginald, shut the door quietly; my nerves will not bear the falling of a pin."

No, it is my father, poor old man! who, redder, fatter, balder, wheezier, more city-magnate-looking than ever, gets upon gouty toes to kiss his only son, the varnish peeling off him everywhere as he does so. I submit with heroic fortitude; for the noble viscount is looking on, no inconsiderable amount of disgust fishily gleaming in both covered and uncovered eye. Poor old man! I would submit to more than that, knowing what I have in store for him.

Dinner is in progress, with its multitudinous courses, its sparkling of silver and crystal glass, its rich yet subdued light, its wealth of flowers, its velvet-shod butler and liveried footmen, its insufferable dullness, its unbearable *ennui*. My father and the noble viscount eat and drink as if eating and drinking were the grand motives of life. My mother eats and drinks as if her appetite as well as her heart were away with that yet unravelled destiny of Laura's and her teeth were an insurmountable obstacle to her mastication. Florence eats and drinks as if even entrées and champagne were too gross aliments for her celestial beauty, and touches knife and fork with an air of supreme condescension. Mabel and the girls eat and drink what they are offered, with the healthy appetites natural to their age. I eat and drink with a pained consciousness that the costly viands are choking instead of nourishing me, and a longing, which becomes intenser with every morsel and every fiery drop, for the "dinner of herbs," upon which I used to feast so sumptuously in the old *Schenke* at Gütsch—or even for the kippered herrings of Aileen.

There is very little conversation. My father's face grows purple as he tosses down glass after glass of the fiery poison Englishmen call port. The noble viscount, incited by the wine-cup, murmurs a few faint compliments to the lady at his side, whose snowy neck and shoulders, frankly and freely exposed for the benefit of everybody indiscriminately, are not one whit agitated by the reminder that the morrow will transform her into a viscountess. Mabel and the girls whisper together furtively, but subside into alarmed silence when my father's blood-shot eye lights upon them. I have ceased to wonder at the goutiness of the latter's toes. I now cease to wonder how he

manages to keep his girls in such subjection, reserving that emotion instead for the more personal consideration of how Aileen dared—how I shall dare—defy him.

I begin to envy the footmen as, course by course, the never-ending dinner “drags its slow length along.” They can, and do, break the spell by an occasional “’Ock, sir?” “Claret, my lord?” “Pommery, ma’am?” at measured and stately intervals. I wonder how the girls can bear it, or how I ever managed to do so in the times that are past.

At last—everything must come to an end—dessert is on the table. The butler places fresh decanters of port and sherry before my father, and follows the retreating footmen. A little more dallying and toying with sugared foreign fruits and costly hothouse English productions, and the ladies rise. The viscount, with somewhat unsteady steps, rises too, to open the door for my mother. As the fair cavalcade sweeps gently out of the room, I feel my lips curling and my cheeks flushing at the sight of the superfluity of their garments below, and the scantiness thereof above, the waist. I wonder what the footmen think of it, and whether this view of the thing ever strikes the ladies.

But I cannot escape yet with propriety. There are a few more bottles of port to be emptied before we are presentable for the drawing-room. When, finally, my father, in a voice so thick that you can hardly hear through it, and, moreover, weighted with hiccoughs, proposes that we should do so, the noble lord is under the table (I am writing of five-and-twenty years ago), and the idea has to be abandoned. I help his valet, who is near at hand and no whit amazed at the spectacle, to drag him to his feet, for which service of love he is remarkably grateful and affectionate. He sheds tears upon my waistcoat, tells me I’m a “*cappelgoolfell*,” and commissions me with some message for Florence, utterly inexplicable except the last word, which bears some resemblance to *comments*. I decline to deliver them, keeping the same, and my own, to myself for the nonce. Two or three of the footmen, helped by his own servant, convey him to his coach in waiting, and my father reminds the valet not to forget that to-morrow is the wedding-day. “Don’t let him—hic—be late,” says my father. “No, sir,” says the man.

The servant keeps his word. The noble bridegroom, very seedy-looking and shaky, and fishier-eyed than ever, lets his

lovely bride suffer the pain of suspense only one quarter of an hour. The still driving rain, and still howling wind, offer some excuse, perhaps, for this delay ; which, besides, may be but an early and wholesome reminder to the future viscountess that her lord is fully aware of his superiority, and means her to be aware of it too. There is a vast amount of white satin and orange blossoms, and no apparent end of carriages and smiling guests, and if the necks and shoulders of the shivering bridesmaids did not turn goosy and blue and their pretty noses a little red, one might be deceived as to the chilliness of heart and atmosphere pervading the whole. The Church, represented by four or five stoled priests, goes through her part with somewhat accelerated speed—it is so cold and so close on twelve—yet still with sufficient solemnity. Miss Florence Smythe becomes Viscountess Kilreeny in full accordance with the Ritual. The Church's benediction is upon her as she sweeps down the aisle, her hand upon her husband's arm, her train borne after her by two envious bridesmaids. The rain of heaven is upon her for a second as she steps out from under the shelter of God's house into the carriage. The bells are chiming over her, to the full as gleefully as if the sun were shining ; but what about the blessing of God ?

I hear two or three comments—plebeian, not noble ones—as I pass out in my turn, feeling as lachrymose as if I had been to a funeral.

“Did you ever see such a beauty ?”

“*I* prefer Miss Aileen.”

“Hush ! see, he is smiling. What a set of teeth ! Don't they look as if they could bite ?”

“Ay, and she'll find out that they can. *I* know him.”

The next whispering couple are his valet and my old acquaintance John.

“He looks seedy, don't he ?”

“Seedy ! Oh, the night I've had ! It took no end of soda-water, with a good many hairs of the dog which bit him, to bring him to his legs again.”

The wedding breakfast was over. The noble pair were gone, *en route* for the Sunny South, to celebrate there the sweetness of the honeymoon. The guests were gone. The excitement was gone, leaving behind it an uncomfortable vacuum—the inevitable flatness of reaction.

But I was not gone ; neither was my fear. It had grown immensely since my arrival, and stood up, gigantic, gaunt, and hollow-eyed, before me the first moment I was alone with my father. It laid a cold and clammy hand on the lips of Resolution, trying hard to stifle her more-than-once-repeated steady *Now*.

"You got my letter, then, my boy?"

"What letter, sir?"

"The one I sent to that place in Switzerland—what d'ye call it?"

"Do you mean Lucerne?"

"Ay, Lucerne. What made you stay there so long?"

"I have been ill. I told you so."

"Yes. You had a tumble into the water. It makes my old blood run cold to think of it. But you are well and strong now. You look well and happy, my son."

His words were an assertion, yet the tone in which he uttered them was strongly tinged with almost pathetic inquiry.

"I am well, sir ; and I should be the happiest man on earth if—"

"If? There shall be no 'ifs' in your case. You *shall* be happy. I have only lived to make you happy. I shall die content when I have done it."

He shook the ashes out of his meerschaum as he spoke, somewhat vehemently. That was one of his plebeian habits : he would smoke a pipe, even as lord of Ballyacora. As for me, I threw my unfinished cigarette into the fire, and tried to believe it was that which was making me feel so sick. "These Russian cigarettes," I said, putting a hand up to my paling cheek and desperately biting my trembling lip, "are an imposition."

"You've had your fling, my boy," continued my father, refilling his pipe. "You can never say I grudged you your fling. You've drawn heavily upon me during the last year or two ; made ducks and drakes of the money I've sweated to earn, I'll be bound ; sown wild oats enough for a dozen ordinary fellows ; and committed every extravagance under the sun. Never mind ! 'Tis all the same to me. There's plenty more grist in the mill, and it's all there for you, Charley. All yours, my boy."

"Thank you, my dear father, thank you. You have been very good to me. I know it. I acknowledge it with my whole heart."

He looked lovingly at me ; his red face redder than ever from suppressed emotion. As for me again, I was actually making what my noble friends Lord George Graceless and Sir Harry Goitt would have called "a damned fool" of myself.

"Why, Charley, lad ! You don't think I mean to throw it up at you, do you ? You don't think there's anything I'd grudge my only son ? And now you're going to repay me for it, you know, a thousandfold."

"How, sir ?"

"I've got good news for you, my boy. You are tired of having your own way, ain't you ? I can see it in your face. Well, you shall do my bidding for a change, before settling down to be your own master and master of Ballyacora."

"If I can, my dear father, I'll do your bidding gladly."

"If you can, eh ? You *can*, fast enough ; and shall—I mean, you will. That was our compact, you know. You haven't forgotten our compact, my boy ?"

"Did I make one ?"

"Ay, and one you'll have to keep, Charles. *Have* to, mind you ! But it hardly need be a restraint on you at all, or only for a few weeks of courtship. A man may do what he will, after marriage, with his wife."

"Can he make her a good mother to his children, sir ?" I asked, bitterly.

He winced at that. I saw his forehead contract and his eye fall. But he hardened himself too, as he answered, doggedly—

"He can prevent her, at all events, from interfering with his views about them."

"Can he make her love him ?"

"He can make himself do without it."

"Do without the most blessed thing God has given us ? Do without that, the want of which has made this fine estate and noble mansion the very barrenness of desolation—more wretched than the poorest hovel ?"

The words burst from me unawares. All my fine plans and carefully rehearsed sentences for attacking his prejudices were shattered by my own impetuosity. I had meant to divulge my sentiments gradually and gently, and now they had rent a way for themselves with the suddenness of a flash of lightning. I had meant, in short, to play the part of some one vitally different

from Charles Reginald Smythe, Esquire, and Nature angrily shook me out of my studied *rôle* almost at the first sentence.

He looked at me with very threatening clouds gathering heavily on his brow, yet still trying to cherish a faint hope that his ears were deceiving him—that it was in some nightmare that those hot words of protest had been roared into his brain. Then he dashed his pipe into the grate and rose and faced me, the purple veins upon his purple forehead swelling till I thought they must surely burst.

I rose too. Never in my life had I had to do a work so hard as this. Never in my life had I loved the old man before me as I loved him now. Yet there could be no compromise. I knew that. I knew that if my hand were even destined to deal him a death-blow, I must do it.

There is this quality in my nature, faulty as it otherwise is: however low my courage may sink *before* a crisis—and, God knows, it often sinks to the dregs of pusillanimity—it always rises at the moment, level with it. It rose now. If my hand were destined to deal him a death-blow, I must deal it.

For, strange to say, the knowledge of the pain I had to inflict, entering into my soul like a sharp iron, torturing my own nerves tenfold, did not weaken, but steeled me. There was no fear of Courage swooning now; the most telling antidote had been applied. Under the fire of its touch, she rallied and stood upright.

I took the old man's trembling hand and gently put him back into the chair from which he had risen; I threw myself upon my knees before him. He had a right to demand—not in words, he spoke no word; but with every line upon his face, every white hair upon his head—he had a right to demand that I should exhaust pleading before venturing to assert *my* right—the God-given right of my manhood.

"Listen, my dear father! Let me explain before you are angry with me. You are a magistrate. You would let any wretched poacher, any strolling vagabond, speak before you committed him, would you not? Do not be harder on your only son. I cannot repay you in the way you wish, but I will try hard to repay you in some other way."

He made no answer, but his bloodshot and glassy eyes were upon me.

"I have a cause to plead with you, sir—my own cause; and

I know you will hear me. Also I have to plead for another ; for your daughter, my sister, father—for Aileen."

He wrenched his hand away from mine. Oh, it was dreadful to know that it was passion, not relenting, stifling the curse upon his lips !

"I went to see her when I was in London," I continued, desperately ; "she is so good, so sweet, so happy ! Her only trouble, your displeasure and your anger. She begs and prays you to forgive her."

"She's getting tired, I warrant you," he sneered, "of the dry crust and tasteless water to which she has condemned herself. But what's she to me ? What's the whole world to me ? Damn it ! Go on, about yourself. Let me know, in as few confounded words as possible, whether I have a son still or not."

"But, sir, Aileen—"

"I won't hear another word about her. I've forbidden the mention of her name in the house. Not even you shall disobey me. I've given every one about the place orders that if she or her infernal beggar of a husband venture inside the park gates, they are to be driven out with a horsewhip. Plead your own cause and be quick about it, or, by G—, I'll commit you without a pleading."

I got up from my knees, and stood now before him, silently combating with two new opponents—Indignation and Hot Anger. He went on :

"I'll shorten the matter by putting a few questions which you'll please to answer straightforwardly, unless you'd have me treat you in like manner. When I was a lad, my father never gave me a sixpence without counting it, and making me give strict account of it too. I've given you thousands of pounds, and never asked for a reckoning."

"I know it."

"Ah, you know it, with that confounded curl of the lip which was your answer to every thrashing I gave you when you were a boy, and which signified—I knew it well—that you meant to go your own way in spite of me. I used to be proud of it then ; thought it showed pluck and spirit and blood ; but, mark my words, Charles, if you have your own way this time, it will be as an outlaw and as a beggar."

"I was prepared for that, sir."

"The devil you were!" getting up and pacing the room, his wrath rising to madness with his sense of its impotency; his right hand clenching with the strong impulse of a hot-blooded and undisciplined man to throw down all obstacles to his will by brute force. "That's the meaning of the look in your eyes, the curve of your lip, that's puzzled me ever since you came home. Who would be a father, to have the child, the son whom he cherished as the apple of his eye, grow up to be a man, only to stand there, like you, defying him, and to be powerless—Charles, you are killing me."

"Sir, it is that I find so hard to bear—not your anger."

"Why don't you tell me what I want to know, then? Does it give you pleasure to witness this protraction of my pain? Sit down and tell me why you refuse to do the one thing I have lived for. I am an old man—remember that."

"I do remember it, sir. I do remember it."

"Speak, then."

"You want me to marry, and I want to marry. So far we are of one mind."

"Whom do you want to marry?"

"The woman who has my heart, my soul, my honor."

"And whose honor you have in return—eh?"

I sprang to my feet. I gasped for breath under the blow he hit me. I staggered under it. Oh, my Thérèse, my one earthly treasure, my spotless love!

"A damned foreigner, I suppose, who has thought to catch a golden Englishman?" He laughed.

"Not even you, sir—not even you, shall speak of her in that tone, with that sneer."

"Hoity, toity! 'Shall, sha'n't!' I'm not in my dotage yet, sir; I'm master still in Ballyacora, and you, sirrah, are but a guest, at my pleasure. Listen. You will give this woman up. Send her a few hundred pounds—if you've promised her, or compromised her—as compensation."

I was silent.

"Do you hear me, sirrah?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"I have nothing further to add, sir. If I say more I shall forget myself."

"You have done that, confound you! more than enough already. You will give this woman up."

"I will not."

"*You will give this woman up.*"

"I will die first."

"Or me, and Ballyacora Hall."

"The alternative rests with you, sir. I have spoken."

"And, by G—! so have I. Do you retract?"

"No, never."

"Once more; only once, sir. When you were born, and I looked upon my son's face for the first time, I said: 'I will work night and day, never tiring, never weary, to make this boy what I am not—a gentleman.' I kept my word. My son, come and kiss your old father, who will very soon cease to be a burden on you. Give him this one thing in return for all his sleepless nights and hard-working days. Marry a lady—an English lady of birth; I have one in prospect for you—and all that I have is yours."

"Oh, father, if it were *anything* else!"

"Anything but the thing I want. Charley, my son, my boy, whom I have always loved beyond everything! let *me* go on my knees now, and beg you. I am old. I have worked hard. And to see it all blasted by you for whom I have worked!"

Oh, those tears—those piteous, heartrending tears in aged eyes! Providence was hard upon me. God was cruel. Fate was relentless. With his hand wrenching at my heart-strings, what could I do?

"The right, however hard." Moppert's last words came to save me. A divine hand wiped the death-sweat from the paling face of Courage; a divine cordial raised her to her feet again.

I put my father once more back into his seat. I knelt down beside him. I raised his withered hand to my lips. "Father, forgive me, but this one thing I cannot do. I dare not."

He was very quiet now. The flush on his face had faded into leaden gray, but he neither repulsed me nor spoke one angry word. His command to ring the bell was almost gentle, yet I drew no consolation from his gentleness. It was the quiet of a volcano before the outburst which would desolate a home. Hope could not breathe in the sulphurously charged atmosphere; it gasped, reeled, fell prostrate.

The footman came in answer to the summons.

"John, tell the men-servants I want them all here in the smoking-room. Tell them to come at once."

"Yes, sir."

"The coachman is gone home, I suppose, and all the grooms, too?"

"Miss Florence's new groom—I beg your pardon, sir; would say, my Lady Kilreeny's—is in the servants' hall, sir; he has leave to come once a week; he is courting—"

"Let him come with the rest."

"Yes, sir."

I stood leaning against the mantelpiece, hardly wondering what was going to happen, so exhausted was I with my effort.

The men came. They were a stately group. I thought so, as I stood there listlessly looking at them. Some Irish, some English; all fine, well-grown fellows.

"Henry" (Henry was my sister's groom), "what sort of weather is it?"

"The wind is high, sir, still; but it don't rain now, nothing to speak of."

"Gypsy has not been out to-day?"

"No, sir. Miss Ethel rides her sometimes, sir, since—but to-day it has been too wet."

"She goes like the wind. How long would it take you to ride her to Cork and back again?"

"To-night, sir?"

"Yes, to-night."

"The roads is rough, sir, after the rain, but she'll do the sixteen miles in an hour, easy. Say two hours and a half to be back again, sir."

"Good. Saddle her at once. Ride to Cork, and bring back my lawyer with you. You know where to find him?"

"Yes, sir. To-night, sir?"

"Don't repeat my orders, idiot! Yes, to-night. Tell him he *must* come at once. I want to alter my will."

The groom went. The men looked furtively at each other, and at their master, and at me. They all knew perfectly that there was something unusual in the wind, which now, after ineffectual efforts to get at us through the well-fitting windows, shrieked a fierce protest in at the keyhole, and roared a furious warning down the chimney.

"Tomkins," said my father, addressing the butler, a grave, respectable, smooth-faced, smooth-voiced, smooth-handed man, with sons of his own, "do you know who this—this gentleman is?"

"Mr. Charles, sir?" The man's answer was one of amazed inquiry.

"Yesterday—an hour ago," continued my father, now addressing them all, "he was my son, your young master. Any disobedience to his orders on the part of any one of you would have been punished by the instant dismissal of the offender. You hear me?"

"Yes, sir."

"To-day he is a beggar, an outcast. I have sent for my lawyer to strike his name out of my will. Tomkins, you have saved a little, I dare say. You are a rich man, compared with him, now."

The men stood aghast.

"If he should venture to enter this house or park again, you have my orders to set the dogs at him; to drive him from the premises with a horsewhip. If he should venture to command any of you, you have my orders to laugh in his face."

The men looked at one another, and looked at me, and looked at him, and stood silent.

"Do you hear me, blockheads? Answer."

"Yes, sir."

All my fear was gone now, as entirely annihilated as if it had never existed. I drew myself up proudly. I was sensible of a feeling akin to exultation. Oh, he was going the wrong way to work; he was killing Pity and Remorse, his two most powerful allies! He was murdering filial affection; hardening the heart he might have softened!

"As for you, sir," he added, turning to me, and trying hard to speak without emotion, though even his lips were white with the struggle, "I give you half an hour to quit my estate. If at the end of that time you are found anywhere upon it, you will be kicked out. Go and starve in a gutter with the woman who has 'your soul, your love, your honor,' if so be that she does not change her mind, now that you are a beggar. Go to—perdition."

"God forgive you, sir!"

Oh, it was dreadful to know again that it was not relenting,

but passion, stifling the curse upon his lips! The ghastly gray of his face faded to a still more deadly pallor. I saw the butler hurry to his assistance. I turned once more; I thought he was dying.

"Do not touch me," he gasped. "Put him out, Tomkins. Don't let him come near me."

"You will take care of him," I said, earnestly.

"Yes, sir. Please to go, sir. It's a bit of a faint. He'll come round directly."

I ventured to issue one more command before leaving my father's house. I told one of the staring footmen to fetch Miss Mabel. The man did not laugh in my face. He obeyed me.

From a dark corner of the hall I watched the long, rustling folds of my sister's silk dress descend the wide staircase; noted the anxious, scrutinizing look in those gray eyes of hers, which always seemed on the lookout for trouble; and saw her turn into the smoking-room.

Then I put on the overcoat and hat which John, the supercilious, officiously handed me, and, with no word of leave-taking, no loving pressure from a friendly hand, no tender kiss upon my cheek, passed out of the stately mansion, of which, up to this day, I had believed myself the indisputable heir.

The whistling wind, coming boisterously towards me as I slowly went down the broad stone steps, hissed, like an unfeeling and heartless audience, careless disapproval of my *début* in defiance; the withered leaves which it had driven before it on to the terrace trembled and rustled mournful memories of vanished hopes, with which the invigorating sap of fickle spring had filled them brimful, and drearier forebodings of a sadder and more wintry time in store; leafless trees, gaunt and horrible in the dimness of the starless night, tossed wild arms of horror at my audacity, and groaned bitterly at thought of its cruel punishment; bright-eyed deer looked at me aghast or fled before me as from a pestilence. Nature turned traitor to me, shook a fist in my face, and mocked at my discomfiture.

Once more, before turning into the long avenue, I looked back wearily, my heart drained so dry by what had passed that there was no life even in its pain, nothing but sterility and desolation—looked back up into the stony face of an effigied ancestor of the noble lord who had decamped, and into that of John, still

surreptitiously and curiously watching my ignominious exit from my father's house. The one, petrified, eyeless, hard, cruel, passionless, said nothing; the other, stolid, servile, insolent, well nourished bodily, absolutely starving in respect of that higher nourishment we call mental, said plainly: "I knew no good could come of that coach and that driver and those pantaloons."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

POOR MABEL!

"Bien loin de s'effrayer, ou de rougir du nom de Philosophe, il n'y a personne qui ne dût avoir une forte teinture de philosophie. Elle convient à tout le monde: la pratique en est utile à tous les âges, à tous les sexes, et à toutes les conditions: elle nous console du bonheur d'autrui, des indignes préférences, des mauvais succès, du déclin de nos forces ou de notre beauté: elle nous arme contre la pauvreté, la vieillesse, la maladie et la mort, contre les sots et les mauvais railleurs: elle nous fait vivre sans une femme, ou nous fait supporter celle avec qui nous vivons."—LA BRUYÈRE.

THE half-hour's grace which my father had accorded me was not yet fulfilled, when I softly opened a little door by the side of the great gates, and, all unobserved, let myself out of the precincts of Ballyacora Hall. In the maze of darkness and confusion wherein my soul wandered, I had lost the path, got entangled in the shrubbery, and only just escaped drowning in a sombre pool concealed there; the one Aileen alluded to as haunted by the spirits of former victims.

The clock in the porter's lodge loudly struck ten as I passed it. The deep bay of a hound in the distance was borne to me by the warning wind.

I closed the little door as softly as I had opened it, and stood, an outcast, upon the highway.

I had striven hard to do the right; I had striven; but, now that the battle was fought and won, there was no triumph in my heart, only doubt and dismay. My body stumbled in the darkness all around it. My soul, seeking guiding light and finding none, fell prostrate amid the deeper darkness within.

I have been walking fast for about two hours; it must have been *very* fast, my aching limbs are so weary, and, like slaves

driven to desperation, are beginning doggedly to disregard the whip of the driver. Said driver, my own fiercely excited soul, has paid no heed to the complaints of the body; has been utterly indifferent to the raw, searching cold, penetrating to its very marrow; and has totally ignored the drizzling rain, coming down thickly again, and wetting it through and through. What are thy petty sufferings, slave, to me, thy master? I am suffering, too, trying to dull the intensity of my superior anguish by martyring thee.

Again the lash descends, and the weary body makes a fresh effort. It stumbles, staggers like a drunken man, but dares not plead for mercy. It falls at last among the ruts. I am aware that my hand is bruised, my forehead cut and bleeding. I am aware of that, but only because the warm blood trickles over my face. I wonder what it is, and put up my hand to feel, and sicken at the clammy stickiness of the blood, and lean, faint and dizzy, against the wet hedge to steady myself.

I am glad to know that I am invisible there when the returning groom passes me on his road to Ballyacora, the reins loose on the neck of the gallant thoroughbred he is riding, which, with stretched head and panting nostrils, flies past me like a vision. Another half-hour of almost unbearable exertion, my breath seeming sometimes loath to come at all, sometimes coming with a rapidity so great as almost to overbalance me, and a lumbering carriage heaves in view, the pale glimmer of its lamps revealing a solitary occupant "redeeming the time," perhaps because the night is so evil, by throwing strong oaths out upon its startled ear.

Then oblivion, complete and heavy, in a ditch by the roadside, and the pallid morning looking shiveringly down upon me.

Oh, the dreary, weary, never-ending road to Cork! Shall I ever know warmth and comfort any more?

Another horse coming on behind me like the wind. A phantom lady riding it. A lady with a pale, irregular-featured face, and great, anxious, determined gray eyes, which seem ever on the lookout for trouble, and to see it ever coming on apace.

The next moment this lady has sprung from her horse, and has fallen on my neck, and is warming me with a shower of hot tears and loving kisses.

Oh, the dreary, weary, never-ending road to Cork! Shall we

ever get there? She says we shall, trudging sturdily on beside me, and I try to believe her.

A few hours later and I am in a warm bed, and have been fed and am in my right mind. And, best of all, my hand is softly pressed between two tender womanly ones, and my eyes, before closing, look up into two gray ones, full of love and compassion, watching over my repose.

What should we men do without these sweet women given us to be our helpmates?

Aileen had shown me how to dare, and now here was another sister beside me, braving my fate for my sake; combining the courage of a hero with the woman's matchless power of self-sacrifice!

And I had been accustomed to look down upon them with pitying contempt!

"Does papa know that you followed me, Mabel?"

She hung her head and blushed—the truthful girl; then raised her eyes and fixed them steadily upon me.

"No, Charley."

"Then, how—"

"Look," she answered, pushing back her dark hair, no longer blushing, but pale, calm, and resolute, "I have thought you would ask me that, and I am prepared to defend what I have done. I hate to deceive him, but when men are tyrants, it is they who drive the women belonging to them to deception. Women are what men make them, and more than half our sins will be laid at their door."

She rose and began to walk up and down the little private sitting-room she had wisely engaged in one of the obscure inns of the city. Her step was the hurried, irregular one of excitement.

"I have lied," she continued, stopping abruptly and looking me straight in the face, haughtily and without shame, "and I shall go home and lie again, Charley. What would *you* do, if you were delivered over to the absolute control of another, to whom your hopes and wishes and joys and pains were nothing—who would blast them all to gratify one whim, or satisfy one momentary fit of anger?"

"I would fight for my liberty, struggle to obtain it to the death, run away—but I would not lie, Mabel."

"What would you do if you were so bound and manacled that you could neither fight nor run; and knew of one way—poisoning, corroding, defiling, but also simple and easy—for obtaining occasional freedom—the right to which is born with every one of us?"

"I would—would—at any rate, I would not be false to myself. I would not abase myself, even for freedom."

"Ah, Charley, if I were a man, I would talk like you! I do not love deceit any more than you do; but when it is my only weapon, I will use it; and the guilt be upon his head who drove me to it. We all lie at Ballyacora Hall; mamma does, in the least difficulty; we girls must; the servants, too, poor wretches!"

I was silent, and stirred the tea Mabel set before me with an uneasy sense of complicity.

"Women's lives," continued my sister, remorselessly turning the dagger in the breast she had wounded, "are often only lies from the cradle to the grave. The sin be upon your heads. You make us what we are. You make our lives continual refutations of God's will concerning us. If we are punished for it, our punishment (for the very nature, the life-blood of punishment, is justice) will be light compared with yours."

She spoke with extreme bitterness; her gray eyes flashing, her voice sharp and keen as the edge of a sword.

"Look at mamma," she continued; "what a life is hers! Look at us—trampled upon, neglected, left to live or die as chance willed it in our childhood—decked out in tawdry accomplishments and tawdrier finery now, to catch husbands, or rather, masters. I declare to you, Charley, when I go into the ball-room, or to the opera, my bare neck and shoulders white against the jewels upon them, I feel as degraded as if I were a slave, stuck up half naked on the block for buyers to touch and test and examine."

"Mabel! Mabel dear!"

"You are horrified when you hear the truth, Charley. You think because we cannot speak—or only a few of us—we cannot feel. You proclaim the honesty of men and the dishonesty of women as a palpable proof which of the two Nature meant to rule. You make of us incarnate lies, and then hold up holy hands of indignation *when* we lie. You teach certain women by means of bribes, and by weakening and narrowing their

sphere of vision till it is solely concentrated on themselves, to denounce such of their sex as are not satisfied, as unwomanly. *They* are satisfied, lolling on the cushions you provide, feasting on the crumbs from your banquets, soothed into complacency by your kisses. They have no souls to hunger, and when a famishing soul cries out for nourishment, they denounce the sufferer as *unwomanly*. Half our sins you decry as essential to our baser nature; half are unwomanly. As if we were not of your own flesh and blood; work and exercise as necessary to our faculties as to yours; our need of mental life as great!"

"Mabel, Mabel!" But there was no stopping her now; I had to listen.

"Let me have my say, Charley. There is some comfort in not keeping it to myself any longer. I have a man now, who must perforce hear me, and I *will* speak. I *will* lift up my voice this once in solemn protest. You are going to marry, you say. How will you—with the almost unlimited power which the law gives you—how will you treat your wife?"

"I have not thought about that, Mabel. I *love* her."

"You do, you do, Charley. No man could speak the word 'love' with that softened accent, those wet yet earnest eyes, that proud and tender intonation, without feeling it to his heart's core. Now, how do you mean to show your love?"

"You are a close catechist, Mabel. How could I conceal it?"

"That is a counter-question, and no answer. I want an answer, a straightforward one."

"By working for her, night and day, if necessary; by gratifying every wish of hers that I can; by saving her every trouble, and giving her every joy, in my power."

"The working for her night and day will probably be a grim necessity," she continued, dryly, "for the sum of twenty-eight pounds, some odd shillings, and sevenpence halfpenny can't last forever, and—"

"Twenty-*three* pounds, Mabel." For we had counted up the money forthcoming out of the pockets of both of us, with this result.

"So much the worse," she answered, smiling; "it was only the all-important halfpenny I was sure of. Well, the second clause won't do at all; to gratify every wish would be a folly."

"Of course I mean if they are reasonable, and for her good."

"Of course you mean with as much inward reservation as Pascal's '*Père*;' *cela va sans dire*, Charley. However, we will let that pass for the present; because, as for clause third, it must be utterly annihilated if it means in the least what I think it does. What does it mean, Charley?—'saving her every trouble.'"

"Why, if a fellow had any worries out of the house, or got into any money hobble, or couldn't pay his bets—"

"Bets, Charley?"

"Debts, I mean. Why should a wife be worried and pained with outside troubles? I should think it mean and cowardly to vex and annoy her about things I ought to bear for myself, and I would do my best to keep every grievance from her."

"Wrong, Charley. Utterly and entirely wrong. Did not God make woman as a helpmate for man? What right have you to deprive her of that most blessed privilege?—less right than to make bets or debts either. Do you suppose, if she loves you, that she would not notice the trouble in your face? do you suppose that the very fact of your concealing it would not make it appear tenfold? Women have vivid imaginations; plenty of foolish fear for visionary dangers, but more courage than you to bear real pain or face real emergency."

"You think highly of your sex, Mabel."

"I think highly of what they might be, and of what some few are. We are capable of *anything*, Charley. You may make angels or demons of us. And I think unutterably meanly of such men as would deny us the high position to which we were born, who would make of a divine helpmate a slave or a favorite—both conditions equally degrading—whose only credential of manhood is the not being women, and the sneering at those who are."

"How old are you, Mabel?"

"What a curious question for a brother, Charley! Do you want the old nursery answer, 'As old as my little finger and a little older than my teeth'? If indignation at my lot is making a female Methuselah of me in looks—and I dare say it is; I never look in the glass without being astonished at my own ugliness—why, perhaps I may be justified in replying, 'A little younger than I appear.' Nearer than that you can't expect a woman to go."

"You are not ugly, Mabel. Your broad forehead and clear eyes would redeem any—"

"For shame? What an ignominious result of fishing!—an odious conger-eel instead of a beautiful pink salmon. I'll never fish again; be content with my broad mouth and hooked nose and sallow skin, and comfort myself with the philosophical reflection that whoever comes a-courting me will be attracted solely by the profoundness of my wisdom."

"Ay, that's your *tour de force*, Mabel. Where did you get it?"

"Papa was magnanimous enough to let me learn to read; God gave me some brain and some common-sense; *voilà tout*. No, not all; I have access to a few libraries, and read that epitome of human wisdom, *The Times*."

"Well, all I can say is—"

"That the axiom about women's tongues is true, at all events, and that your tea is cold. Let me give you another cup. And now let us talk about your wife that is to be, for in another half-hour I must mount my gallant charger and, under cover of the night, return to Ballyacora."

"I shall not let you go back. I shall take you with me."

"Even your man's omnipotent *shall not* must yield, Charley. Or do you think your twenty-three pounds odd is like the widow's barrel and cruse?"

"As soon as ever I have made a home for myself and her, I shall send for you."

She rather hastily put down the cup of tea she was bringing me, and softly touched my forehead with her lips. There was new light in her gray eyes now—a purer, tenderer light.

"Once or twice, Charley," she said, gently, "I have seriously thought of adopting your suggestion and running away; offering myself to some Christian lady as nursery or scullery maid. I think I could do their work. I'm not fit for anything else, though I've waded through many a book you would laugh, or frown, at if you heard the name of. But the little ones at home, as fatherless and motherless as if both parents were dead—worse off than orphans—how could I leave them? I said we all lied at Ballyacora, but I have tried, I do try, to keep them free from the necessity. I try—forestalling your idea as to troubles—I try to keep my lies to myself."

I told her all about Thérèse and the love I bore her, and the

impossibility it would have been to give her up. I told her of my intention to try and find work somewhere—any work so that we can live. The depression of the night on the road-side had been succeeded by almost buoyant confidence in my own capacity, and my fervent “Where there is a will there is a way” sounded like a pæan.

It was about ten o'clock when I put her on her horse; a late hour for a lady to ride alone, but in Ireland it is only men and oppressors who need fear a lonely road-side. She bent down to kiss me.

“I'm a terrible coward on horseback,” she said, half laughing, and wholly sobbing, as we embraced, “but a famous way of conquering fear is to put a greater fear behind it, and the only thing I was afraid of last night, when I was chasing you, was lest I should miss you in the darkness; and the only one I have now is whether my concocted story will appear credible to papa, in case he has been well enough to miss me.”

“Oh, Mabel, it is a degrading, a horrible necessity!”

“Nevertheless, a *necessity*,” she answered. “Good-bye. God bless you and her, Charley!”

“God bless you, Mabel!”

One touch of her gold-mounted whip on the horse's flank, and she was off like a shot. I saw her look back, and lift her whip again in greeting. The smile had vanished from her lips. Her great, wistful, anxious eyes were full of trembling expectation—like the eyes of one flying from trouble, yet not even daring to hope to win the race.

I went back into the dingy little hotel, the one-eyed, solitary, and shabby waiter, who appeared to be dying of slow consumption and continual preying on himself, eying me with the mien of an emaciated spider who has had the good-fortune to entangle in his meshes a doomed fly. My sigh resolved itself into words as I sat down again before the cheerless fire. “Poor Mabel!” I said; “poor, poor Mabel!”

CHAPTER XXXIX.

AN ENGLISH PROPHETESS AND A SWISS PROFESSORESS.

“God, the best maker of all marriages,
Combine your hearts in one, your realms in one!
As man and wife, being two, are one in love.”

Henry V.

ONCE again I stood before that plate in Clapham which announced with brazen persistency to all whom it might concern that “Gerald Malcolmson, Architect,” was the inhabitant of the house it guarded.

I had just enough coin of this mighty realm of Great Britain to pay the cabman his exact legal fare, with which, strange to relate, he was not satisfied; in fact, so very much the reverse that I became a prey to mental anguish until slow Margery let me in, a laughing-stock to the whole street; several females in various stages of dishabille and curl-paper taking stock of, and out of, me in the generous and candid way peculiar to the lovely sex.

Something glittered brightly under the swinging lamp in the tiny passage as I went in. It was my emerald ring—my sole remaining fortune; and it seemed to say: “Green am I as hope; don’t be hipped yet, old fellow!”

Aileen and another lady were sewing together in the little drawing-room. Both laid down their work and rose, smiling, to greet me—Aileen’s smile preceded by a faint and fleeting shadow. Bless her! it was not want of hearty welcome. She was expecting *him* too, and how could I resent the being second in her affection?

How wonderfully alike they were! As they stood together side by side, with the same fair skin, the same golden, flowing hair, the same deep-blue eyes, they might have been sisters. The German countess was a trifle taller, a trifle paler, a trifle—I am not Malcolmson—a trifle handsomer. But I was proud to see how well my sister sustained the severe comparison. I am not sure that it did not enhance her charms—the sweet con-

fidence in her husband, the sweet expression of content in her own inferiority, making you love her all the more.

"Well, Charley, dear," said Aileen, a little wistfully, when the countess had discovered that she had some writing to do elsewhere, and had considerably left us alone. "Well?"

"Well, Aileen?"

"Has papa—is it really *well*, Charley?"

"I expect so, dear. I have no doubt it will be well in the end."

"But now? Tell me quick, Charley. I am beginning to be frightened."

"But now, I shall have to set to and work for my bread. Now, all my fortune, Aileen, is this ring on my finger, and somebody in Switzerland, and as much of your love as your husband will spare me."

"You don't mean to say, Charley—" She stopped to draw my head to her bosom and to anoint it with her tears.

"I mean to say, Aileen—don't cry, I can't bear to hear you cry—that you and I have both found out that love is worth a million times more than money, and are never going to fret about the paltry one while we have got the glorious other."

"Oh, you poor, poor boy! You don't know what it is to work; you don't know what it is."

"You were working when I came in, Aileen. Was it very dreadful? Does this poor little pricked finger ache very much? You didn't look miserable; but perhaps your happy face was all pretence."

She lifted up my head by its two ears to shake it, and to let me have the full benefit of a tremendous shake of hers, which brought down a golden veil all about her, then twisted that bright hair into little switches wherewith to beat and buffet me, continuing this cruel treatment for some minutes, and winding up with so many penitential kisses upon the face she had beaten that I must, under the combined processes, have become as red as any lobster. And finally she broke out into the merriest and most mocking of laughs, the tears still running down her cheeks, at the disgraceful and helpless condition to which she had reduced me.

"Oh, you untidy boy!" she ejaculated, with that gross injustice of which only women are capable, reproaching me for

her own inhuman deeds, "how dare you come to visit me in such a woebegone condition! Let me brush you up and make you decent before Gerald comes, or he'll not own you for a brother. He's the most awfully neat and tidy of human creatures, and can't bear a hair out of its place. There, how do you like that?"

The "that" was an energetic combing of my hair—making my eyes water and my red face redder—with a pocket-comb which she produced from her pocket for the purpose.

"Very much indeed, Aileen," I answered, heroically.

"Oh, perhaps you like *that* too?" this "that" a smart tap on my ear from the softest little hand imaginable.

"I feel it, Aileen, especially the injustice of it, but I'll try to bear it."

"Oh, you will, will you? You won't be asked, sir. The idea of pretending to compare your working for bread, and my working for Gerald, and for—for—"

"Four others."

"Ridiculous boy! I wonder how your hair would look parted in the middle!"

"I dare you to try."

"Every one would take you for a girl, dressed in man's clothes, and with a false moustache."

"I dare you to insult me."

"You'd look exactly like—like the countess, or like an ugly me."

"Vain little thing! By-the-bye, Aileen, your vanity *does* astonish me. How do you venture to put your plain little face into perpetual comparison with such dazzling beauty?"

"Isn't she a beauty!" cried Aileen, releasing me in her delight. "Gerald is so stupid, he can't see it. He says she'll *do*, and that's all."

"'Tis well," I said, philosophically. "'Tis well for commonplace little things like you that some men are blind; otherwise how would you ever get married?"

"I'm *not* ugly," said Aileen, coloring rather indignantly, but recovering her good-humor at sight in a mirror of her own glowing face; "other men don't think me ugly, I'm sure."

"Perhaps 'tis only brothers that are blind."

"Far more likely. Or perhaps only this one old goose of a

brother, who can travel for days together with the most beautiful lady in the world and not fall in love with her."

"She and I are too much alike, Aileen."

"Who's vain now, I wonder?"

"And like and like don't assimilate well. An alkali requires an acid."

"Don't talk to me about learned things I don't understand. Tell me what she's like, this treasure in Switzerland; that will be a thousand times more interesting."

"Not like me, certainly."

"Hum! Brown as a berry, I dare say."

"Rather brown."

"Dumpy and fat?"

"Because I am tall and slim? Well guessed, Aileen."

"Well, men *are* enigmas? Downright ugly, I'll be bound."

"I will crave the law, and penalty, and forfeit of your bond, Aileen, in a flood of penitential tears, some day; if I may be permitted to thus transpose the words of the immortal Shylock."

"Shylock! Who was he? Some old bore of a lawyer, I expect. I am right, then?"

"Right undoubtedly, seeing you draw your inference inversely from the universally admitted fact of my beauty. And thank you, too, for the crooked compliment."

"Crookedly got at, Charley, with a line and hook. But I was always a rare hand at guessing. I've an intuitive talent for it."

"So I should think."

"My guesses always turn out correct."

"So I should imagine."

"To a T. I always knew you wouldn't sell yourself for a duke's daughter."

"Marvellous far-sightedness!"

"But would throw yourself away."

"Stupendous power of prophecy!"

"Nevertheless, 'brown, dumpy, fat, downright ugly,' doesn't sound attractive."

"Hardly; but when Eros aims at him, shoots him straight through the heart, what's a fellow to do?"

"What, indeed? or a girl, either? But—Eros means love, doesn't it?—love's shaft must have been barbed with *something*."

"So it was, Aileen."

"She can't be rich, for the man who would give up Ballyacora wouldn't be caught with money," said Aileen, her pretty forefinger in her pouting mouth. "Perhaps she's very clever. It's always been a comfort to me that Gerald doesn't care for clever women. He says they're mostly ugly. What *are* you laughing at, Charley?"

"Was I laughing? Perhaps at the recollection of my own many discomfitures with her in argument."

"Goodness! don't go bringing her here to make a fool of me. Supremely clever and supremely ugly. I tremble in my shoes!"

"Well you may, Aileen. She's made me tremble many a time."

"Keep her to yourself, then. Don't bring her to us. I won't have her."

"She might teach you something."

"I won't be taught. No, nor kiss you either, sir. Go and kiss your woman in Switzerland."

"Why, you see, Aileen, she isn't exactly the sort of woman—"

"To be kissed. I should think not; I should imagine not. Oh, you deluded boy! oh, you miserably taken-in Charley! What's her learning going to do for you when you are sick or in trouble?"

"Teach her the right sort of herb to administer."

"When you want a good dinner, and can't pay for a cook?"

"Teach her that cockles or eggs have not the chemical elements suitable— What *are* you blushing for, Aileen?"

"I'm not blushing; or, if I am, it's from pure anger. Go, for goodness' sake, back to Switzerland."

"You may be sure I shall, as soon as— To confess the humiliating truth, I'm rather short of cash just at present."

"And Gerald hasn't a penny to lend you for such a purpose; neither have I."

"You *are* a friend in need, Aileen!"

"I'm fit to cry. I'd like to go up-stairs and cry for hours. I hoped your wife would be a real friend to me, some one I could love; but who can love bones and brains? Better far you had married a duke's daughter, even though we should never meet again. I *cannot* digest this creature in spectacles."

"I don't want you to. I want to keep her for my own digestion. Who told you she wore spectacles, by-the-bye?"

"Those blue-stockings always do. I can see her as plain as plain. Rather sallow than brown, a lumpy forehead, eyes as fishy as the viscount's, scraggy hair, scraggy shoulders, lank and bony."

"Oh, you vicious little thing! How dare you talk to me like that of my *fiancée*? Besides, I thought she was lumpy and fat."

"No, no. There's some comfort in lumpiness and fatness. There's some humanity in them. There's none—not a morsel—in your *femme savante*, your stony-eyed Swiss professoress, your chemical ogress. Ugh! you've made me perfectly miserable. No, I won't sit on your knee; I wouldn't usurp that creature's place for ever so. Gerald wouldn't let me, either. That's his knock. Let me go to him."

Exit Aileen, flushed, dishevelled, pouting; a living and lovely image of a naughty little woman who, having conjured up a wasp to sting her, presses the tormentor to her bosom, hugs the pain to keep it warm, and won't let any one remove it or try to alleviate the smart. For imagining a grievance, gloating over it, refusing to part with it, making the very utmost of it, let a woman alone!

Also, for bearing "perfect misery," not only with the stoicism of a hero, but the gayety of a faun. Aileen, with that sting in her bosom—a real one, for there were real tears in her eyes—manages to make us all very nearly perfectly happy. She makes me forget Ballyacora Hall and my empty pockets, and think only of Thérèse; makes her husband forget City troubles and wonderful designs that have been rejected, and think only of a happy home, with the loveliest little wife always there to fill it with perpetual sunshine; makes the pale, beautiful countess forget the pine-woods of Hungary and perfidious princes, and learn that there are still guileless and glad homes in merry England; makes us all feel to the inmost core of our hearts what happiness, what blessings, a woman may bestow, if she only will.

I had hardly thought about the puzzle as to where I was to spend the night, when I was informed by a peremptory little woman, in the most peremptory manner possible, that my bedroom was ready for me; that they were all getting terribly tired of my company; and that I must submit to be as ignominiously hurried off to bed as if I had been a naughty boy in disgrace. Where the bedroom came from I don't pretend to know. Per-

haps Aileen—cunning little fairy!—conjured it into being for the occasion. But it was a real and tolerably substantial one. The bed—a four-poster—did not give way under me, and was wide enough and long enough even for a fellow of my length and bulk. I wondered who the last occupant was as I slowly undressed, and what sort of a dandy he might have been. I concluded he was a dandy, and a stiff one, because, mechanically opening a drawer, I had discovered therein razors in close juxtaposition with curl-papers. Byron used to curl his hair, didn't he?

I dreamed about this dandy when I finally fell asleep after a long period of restlessness; and he was not one, but two, or, rather, two in one. I dreamed also of my father, and of Mabel, and of a wayside ditch. I dreamed, furthermore, of a vacuum, painful, unbearable, and of something filling it. I dreamed of Poverty, in the garb of an angel, with soft eyes and hands, only strong and tender, never rough. I dreamed of scrambling over hedge and ditch, across fire and through water, to get at Love, and of its divine presence in my heart. I dreamed of the one thing money is powerless to buy—the only thing which makes life worth the living.

And I awoke to a sense of peace and safety and security, such as I had not felt for months. The rock whereon my life had been anchored had been shattered by an earthquake, and I was adrift upon the great ocean of time to shift for myself. But I was young and strong, my own hand upon the rudder, the wind of heaven in my sails, Hope at my bows, Love itself beside me, its omnipotent touch rousing up forces hitherto undreamed of; resources hitherto stagnant; powers which, without the knowledge taught by it, would have rusted away in obscurity.

CHAPTER XL.

HUMBLE PIE.

“Doch wer ist so gebildet, dass er nicht seine Vorzüge gegen andere manchmal auf eine grausame Weise geltend machte? Wer steht so hoch, dass er unter einem solchen Druck nicht manchmal leiden müsste?”

GOETHE (*Wahlverwandtschaften*).

THE next day I had some private conversation with my brother-in-law. Our positions were curiously reversed since he had

sent me that letter to Gütsch. It was he who had the whip-hand now, and I'm bound to say he made me feel it. Not with ungenerous intent; he only put me through some preliminary paces; and if he struck sharply on a raw spot now and then, it was doubtless but to try my temper. "Fiery and full of mettle, restive yet teachable," was, I think, his final verdict; "resents both whip and curb, but will do his best without either."

"You understand French, German, and Italian, I think you said?" he inquired, after a short period of silence, during which he sat frowning and biting his under lip.

"All three perfectly. And Latin and Greek, too, as well as most fellows."

"Latin and Greek be hanged! We don't want them."

I kept my temper. I *did*. It nearly broke loose through my clenched teeth, but I did keep it, and only drew my breath hard for a few seconds.

"You say 'perfectly,'" he added, with a mocking half-smile which made me writhe, it was so possible to construe it into a sneer. "You mean 'fairly.' You can write a decent letter in all three languages without any glaring mistakes in spelling or grammar?"

"I mean what I say," I retorted, haughtily.

"Good. But, my lad, you'll have sometimes, in your new career, not to say all you mean."

"I beg your pardon. I mean now that I *can* write in these languages without any glaring mistakes in grammar."

"Oh, you'll do, I dare say. A colleague of mine—if I may venture to call him so—quite a great gun in the profession, whose design for some foreign building has been accepted—told me the other day he wanted a foreign correspondent—not a German. The Germans are crack hands at that sort of thing, but he's got a spite against them."

"I shall be very glad to accept the post."

"Not quite so fast, my lad. It isn't thrown at your head yet. There are a good many preliminaries—deucedly unpleasant ones, too. You are not accustomed to a dish of humble pie, are you? Well, I've had to eat my share; I shall have more to eat, I dare say; most men get it served out to them occasionally in working their way up through life. But I can tell you, if you've a proud stomach, it's uncommonly apt to stick in your throat."

It was sticking there now—a piece of it. That more-than-once-repeated “my lad” of his, adopted since yesterday, wouldn’t accommodate itself to my palate at all. “What the deuce—” I muttered, and could not help myself.

“Did you speak?”

“Only in soliloquy.”

“Hum! A bad habit, my lad. The sort of habit that’s apt to make employers think you’re talking *at* them. And they don’t like it. And what they don’t like, you know, you’ll have to lump.”

I began to think that earning one’s bread was a confoundedly unpleasant business, and that my brother-in-law, without Aileen, was as disagreeable a fellow as I ever met in my life.

Meanwhile he sat opposite me, his hands in his trousers pockets, his legs as indifferent to the majesty of my presence as if I had been a nobody, his keen, bright gray eyes upon my down-cast face, his upper lip partially raised with that suspicious smile so translatable into a sneer. He was putting me through my paces, trying my temper, and the process was—where am I to find a strong enough adjective without trespassing on the unallowable?

“I’ll take you to call upon him to-morrow morning,” he continued, jingling coin in those pockets of his as if on purpose to remind me that I had none to jingle. “To-day I have an engagement. To-day the ladies must take care of you. Your old nurse lives close by in this row, and is almost a daily guest of ours. You can go and see her if you like, or wait for this evening, when she’ll come and see you. By Jove! that’s a woman in a million!—a woman with a history. She’ll tell it you, I dare say.”

“How did you get to know her?”

“She was a friend of my mother’s, her only friend when she was in trouble. I come of a good stock, but was the only son of my mother, and she a widow. I’ve had to fight my way, inch by inch. This little house is a palace to some I’ve lived in. But I’ll go up, not down. If I live, Aileen—bless her!—shall have a better home some day; though I think we couldn’t have a happier one.”

I thought he wasn’t so bad but that he might have been worse after all.

"I've been Jack of ever so many trades since I commenced my brilliant career," he continued, smiling; "a career which had been rather meteor-like and erratic up to my marriage, when it entered, as in duty bound, upon a steady course round a household sun. I know the taste of humble pie in its every stage, from nauseous chewing to painful digestion, and can truly say that it is bitterer in the mouth than in the stomach, where not unfrequently it may prove a wholesome tonic, I dare say. I began life myself, after being detached from my mother's apron-strings, as a Christ's Hospital boy—ran away on account of a most unaccountable but absolutely invincible prejudice to the cane and yellow stockings; began it again as a lawyer's clerk—ran away on account of a, no doubt, richly deserved but unappreciated box on the ear; began it again as a surgeon's apprentice—ran away on account of an overdose of cold mutton and an overdose of strychnine, the latter of which, but for the stomach-pump, might have destroyed the hope of a family and brought me to the gallows; began it again as a student for Holy Orders—ran away because of the Thirty-nine Articles and the Athanasian Creed."

"Your conscience, I suppose, wouldn't allow—"

"Conscience, my dear fellow, was innocent of the whole affair. Conscience is rather hardly dealt with; she is, not seldom, illegally and cruelly overlaid—a great deal of the load being unjustly forced upon her. It was the fault of a, no doubt, not sufficiently disciplined Inclination, which cunningly incited Memory to become an ally. Together they turned sulky, would have nothing to do with the Thirty-nine Articles, and let the creed of St. Athanasius wilfully escape again as fast as it was taken prisoner. The keeping anything in custody—even the sublime ritual of the Church of England—wasn't in their line, they swore—the jades!"

I could not help laughing; but though his gray Irish eyes, with that dash of wicked humor in them, twinkled a response, his firm, massively moulded, resolute, rather obstinate-looking English mouth and chin were as solemn as those of a judge. His Inclination resembled himself, beyond a doubt; smooth and docile enough, stroked the right way; rough, and emitting dangerous sparks of electricity, if handled in the wrong one.

"And whom do you think I ran to?" he inquired.

"To your mother, I suppose."

"Niver a bit. I'm half an Irishman, you know, and my mother was a whole one; forgive the bull, it's intuitive. She'd have given me a true Irish reception; been sorry for it afterwards, I dare say; but will sorrow mend a broken head?"

"Not exactly."

"You see we were too much alike not to quarrel. She loved me passionately; yet her love was like her words many a time—too hot not to hurt you. So I'd let her blow off the superfluous steam and cool down a bit in solitude, the while I put my body and my cause into the most loving, and firm, and tender hands I knew of in the whole wide world—into those of your aunt—bless me, the head of the cat! Wouldn't Aileen blow me up if she knew!—your nurse, I mean."

"Yet 'rolling stones,'" I said, too stupid to understand him, "gather no moss."

"Thru for ye, my boy, and a narrow escape for me into the bargain. Aileen's a darling, but I have her strict commands; and, womanlike, when she *does* come down upon a fellow, she knows neither end nor mercy. But then, you see, I was only rolling away from what Nature never intended me for. 'Twas she herself gave the impetus."

"What did she intend you for?"

He took up a blotting-book and pencil and rapidly sketched the most compact little villa imaginable—not an artist's sketch, an architect's.

"This. How do you like it? Dwelling-rooms here, kitchens, *etcetera*, behind. See, this corner utilized will make a smoking-room for a prince, and the neatest little bedroom over it. Elizabethan style, mark you; nothing like it for a house. 'Tis my idea for Aileen's future residence, somewhere on the banks of the Thames—Richmond way. Stables small; we don't go in for magnificence. Just room for a carriage-horse, and one for her to ride. She's fond of riding—the dear! Heigho! while the grass is growing the steed may starve, and the hill-top is a long way off yet. I'm content with stubble, been used to it all my life, but I'd like her—I'd like her, my precious wife, to live in clover."

I began to think that Aileen might have married a duke, lived in the stateliest castle in the land—wallowed in luxury, so to speak—and done *worse*. I began to think that a man had no

need to be as handsome as myself to be thoroughly admirable. With his gray Irish eyes all aglow, his resolute mouth softened and sweetened by a smile tender enough to win any woman's affection, Gerald Malcolmson deserved the stamp of hearty approval which my heart, as well as conscience, now impressed upon him. I began to like my brother-in-law.

Then I took up his sketch; somewhat stormily asserting, to hide the ignominious fact that I was moved—though why men, *with* men, should be so intensely ashamed of any show of feeling, I can't imagine—that the little design for the villa, at present *en Espagne*, couldn't be improved on. "I like it immensely," I said; adding, "So it was my dear old nurse who was your guardian angel too? Is she a relation of yours?"

"No," he said, shaking his brown head, "I'm only a usurper on her affections; I've no inherited and natural right to them, as you have. By Jove! the cat again! If I don't take care my own household cat, which Aileen keeps somewhere with her curl-papers, will be put into severe requisition this night. Yes, it was your nurse who was always ready to open a kind door and kinder heart to the runaway; first feeding me until I could hardly walk (women always think, if a boy's in trouble, he must be hungry), and then marching me off with tears of pity, but with unfaltering firmness, to the earthly arbiter of my fate—the rich bachelor uncle who paid for my several beginnings in life and took unwilling acknowledgment out of me in castigations!"

"Castigations?"

"Ay, he had heavily purchased that right, you see; and has scored his accounts against me on my body many a time. He was a lawyer, he was, and understood the dodge of cross-questioning a fellow into lies, and then licking him for it, better than any man I ever knew. Peace be to his memory! He tried, and gloriously failed, to cross-question my nature into a lie. But my nature was too honest for him."

"Is he dead?"

"No; married a wife to cheat me out of my inheritance, and may be seen and heard by the curious any day still in the great court at Westminster, and in gown and wig, cross-questioning people into idiocy. Glorious exhibition that, of British justice and British acumen in getting at the truth! A modern substi-

tute for the thumbscrew. Well, he made me an architect, for which I say with all my heart, 'Peace to his memory!' I see him occasionally still, but he never sees me. Heigho! climbing is hard work after all, without a helping hand. By the blessed St. Patrick, my glorious namesake—you didn't know I was christened Patrick as well as Gerald, did you. Don't split on a fellow; I ignore it, even on my door-plate—it's ten o'clock; I must go!"

He put out his hand, smiling now a candid and unsuspecting smile it did you good to see.

"Don't bear malice, old fellow. You began by hating me just now with forty-engine power. Your face is too ingenuous by a long way; when you are hit, you wince terribly. You must learn not to wince, and then people won't hurt you."

I remembered Patsey, my groom, and my first live pony, and knew he was right.

"You remember the proverbial fox and his wise remark when they were skinning him, don't you? I often thought of it when my uncle was scoring his accounts against me on my body, and it's wonderful how it consoled me. Have you forgiven me for getting a grain of amusement at your expense—eh? Well, you will to-morrow, I dare say. Good morning."

CHAPTER XLI.

COALS OF FIRE.

"Blasen ist nicht flöten; ihr müsst die Finger bewegen."

GOETHE (*Sprüche in Prosa*).

My brother-in-law was as good as his word. The next morning I was exalted to a position wherein I need be indebted to no one for my daily bread. I became "foreign correspondent" to that eminent architect, Mr. Multum Inparvo, whose name, doubtless, every one will recollect.

And my salary was to be one hundred pounds per annum. One hundred pounds, with the prospect of advance if I proved satisfactory.

Also with pen and paper *ad libitum*, and with humble pie, not exactly *ad libitum*, but in superabundance.

I pawned my emerald ring to a jeweller, who seemed, oddly enough, to know all about me. It was only gentlemen under clouds whom *he* accommodated, he told me, with a finger at the side of his nose. It was a big nose and a hooked one. And gentlemen under clouds were lawful prey. If at the end of, say, six months, clouds should disperse, old gent relent, or favorites favor me, why, there you were, you know, at a fair usury for the money advanced you.

I had still three weeks of liberty before entering upon my new duties and the brilliant income of one hundred pounds a year. I had time enough to fetch my wife from Switzerland.

Aileen, although still solemnly mournful over my delusion in preferring a Swiss petrification to a beautiful flesh-and-blood countess, nevertheless was too full of love and sympathy to turn her back upon me.

"What must be must, I suppose," she said, resignedly. "And till you have saved enough money to furnish, you must come here, if *She'll* put up with an ignorant little thing like me. I've got the 'Encyclopædia Britannica,' and mean to try and read it through before *She* comes" (Aileen always spoke of her with a capital); "but I don't mind confessing to you, Charley, that it's awfully hard work, and so difficult to keep the thread. Gerald won't help me, and only roars with laughter whenever he sees me at it."

I tried not to smile, but the idea of Aileen's golden head bent over that "Encyclopædia" was almost irresistible.

"Where are you going to find room for us?" I inquired.

"Well, there is that difficulty," acknowledged Aileen, knitting her fair little forehead in her perplexity; "but I *think* I could manage if Gerald and I went out to sleep. It's no good sending out Margery, her bed is too small."

I drew her little golden head to my heart with a passionate fraternal affection such as I had never felt before. How rich I was with such a sister!

And then there was Mabel! Just as if they wanted to undo me with their coals of fire on my head.

That very afternoon—I was going to start on the morrow—came a letter from her.

A letter all blotted and tear-stained, containing forty-five pounds.

"It is all I can scrape together, Charley," she wrote, "and it is all my very own without robbing papa of a halfpenny. Don't go and refuse it, whatever you do, for it would break my heart entirely if you did. Tell Aileen I got her letter through Tomkins, who is a feeling man, though only a butler. He is going to smuggle this to the post for me. And he says, Charley dear, that I am to tell you that if you want any help for the present he will be only too proud to help you. 'Please, miss,' he said, 'tell Mr. Charles that I haven't no doubts myself of his pa coming round, as it stands to reason he should, and he as handsome a young gentleman and as pleasant spoken as I ever set eyes on' (meaning you). 'And if 'tis because of a young woman,' he said, 'as most mischief is, tell him, miss, that 'twas because of a young woman with me too, and since I took her, there's been a great deal more of the better than of the worse, and I've never been sorry. And these remarks, miss,' so he went on, 'are only like the corkscrew to the bottle; the wine being, so to speak, miss, that if Mr. Charles should be in want of a fifty-pound note, or so, till the air is clear again, why, Tomkins, miss, has got it to give him, and proud to do it, Miss Mabel.'

"I nearly threw my arms round the dear old creature's neck, Charley, but remembered in time that it might seem odd to a butler, and perhaps get me into trouble. So now good-bye, and God bless you!

"P.S.—Don't wonder if this letter smells rather of the stables. In fact, I am writing it there on Fanny's back, who stands wonderfully still, and only turns her bonny head sometimes to look at me as if she understood all about it. Papa thinks I'm out riding.

"P.SS.—Papa had a letter this morning from my Lord and my Lady Kilreeny. They are at Nice, and apparently neither find it nice, nor each other. In fact, they seem awfully bored. Serve 'em right!

"Good-bye once more. Fanny won't stand still any longer."

Then there was my dear old nurse! The idea, she said, of her dear boy, or her dear boy's wife, ever wanting a roof to cover them, while she was there! Of course we must first come to her, until things had got straight a bit; and with my hundred pounds per annum, and her income, we should be almost rich.

Oh, what should we men do without these dear, loving, hopeful women, whom God gave us!

But I had my own private anxiety, which I could not share with any one. How had I dared to utter that audacious falsehood—to wit, that Thérèse was my *fiancée*? How did I know that she would marry me at all?

For I had hesitated to ask her to share my wealth, and now I could only ask her to share my poverty. Compared to this anxiety, how small appeared the minor one as to how we should live!

CHAPTER XLII.

A MOTHERLESS BABE.

“Mutter?

—O Himmel, gib, dass ich es dem vergesse,
Der sie zu meiner Mutter machte!”

SCHILLER (*Don Carlos*).

THE evening before I started for the Continent, to return, as I fondly hoped, with my wife, we all spent together at the house of my nurse. Aileen’s little stool was at her husband’s feet, and the countess sat with her beautiful eyes fixed upon my nurse’s face. She was fond of us all, I am sure, but for my nurse she had a special affection, watching her every movement, anticipating her every wish, and always happiest when she was near her.

And my nurse certainly reciprocated this affection. She would watch the girl’s fair face with earnest attention, follow her about the room with her eyes, and when their hands met, a perceptible tremor ran through them both, not of pain but of an exquisite joy.

Indeed, this attachment had grown so strong that we never now dreamed of separating them. My search for that enigmatical Mrs. or Miss Smith had entirely relaxed its vigor. To find her would have been to find a possible obstacle to our present happiness, so I ceased to mention her, and the countess ceased to remind me.

We had been dining late—a sort of farewell dinner in my honor—and a modest decanter of wine and a little dessert still

stood upon the table. My nurse had taken up her knitting, Aileen was sewing vigorously at those tiny and mysterious garments which occupied so much of her attention. The countess was helping her. As for Malcolmson and myself, we had obtained gracious permission from Mistress Aileen—who assumed authority everywhere in a way that would have been most reprehensible if it had not been so charming—to smoke a modest cigar. And we were making the most of the privilege.

But my restlessness was beginning to get the better of me as I thought of the morrow and of what lay before me. I seemed to feel Thérèse at my side, and to hear her sweet, perverse “Monsieur” at my ear. My heart began to beat fast, my cheeks to burn hotly. I must find something to distract me or I should grow wild.

Just then Malcolmson’s words returned to me, as if some one had whispered them into my brain:

“A woman with a history. She’ll tell it you, I dare say.”

“Nurse,” I said, “talk, this evening, and tell us something.”

She looked at me, smiling.

“That is just what I have been thinking of,” she said. “So, if you won’t weary of an old woman’s talk, my dears, to-night I will tell you something I want you all to know.”

The countess rose timidly. She was ever fearful of intruding.

“Sit down again, my dear,” said my nurse, laying her hand caressingly upon the girl’s arm; “you belong to us now, and somehow I feel as if what I have to say is as much for you as for the rest.”

So the countess sat down, and my nurse began.

“It was on my twentieth birthday, my dears. That’s a long time ago now. I had a strange dream, and that dream seems to make the beginning of my story, for my life had been very dull before that, except for one thing. Ah, my Charley, you think no one ever loved like you before, and I thought then that no one ever loved like me, for *his* coming made the first brightness in my life.

“We were only three—my father, my brother Charles, and myself—my father had a shop on Ludgate Hill. He was a leather-cutter, and had a good business. Outside the shop door was our name in tarnished gold letters: Charles Smith & Son.”

Here my nurse looked at me, and with a sudden start of enlightenment I returned her gaze. But I said nothing. She went on :

“ My brother Charles helped my father in the shop, and I kept house for them. I never remember my mother, but my father was very strict with us. I used to go out in the morning to make our household purchases, but I never went out at any other time without my father’s express permission. My brother Charles had a little more liberty than I, but not much. My father kept a tight hand over both of us.

“ He was a very handsome man for his years, at that time ; tall and portly, with clear blue eyes, and hair only just beginning to turn gray. His chin was very large and firm, and, though he spoke little, when he spoke we could not help trembling. If he had told me to jump from the roof of the house, I should have done it, my dears.

“ One evening we were all sitting together as usual. My father was smoking out of a long pipe ; my brother was poring over a dog’s-eared book of figures ; I was sewing and thinking of *him*, my Arthur, who soon was coming to ask my father to let him marry me, and take me home with him to be the happiest little woman in London.

“ And it was the evening before my twentieth birthday.

“ I think I must have been smiling a little, my dears, for I thought of the sweet words that he, my Arthur, had said to me, and all the room seemed full of pleasant things to come. And I was very happy, for the future promised to be so different from the past.

“ Then my father said, looking at me through the cloud of smoke in which he sat—

“ ‘ Mary, go pack a bag for me, child. You’ll know what I want. I start to-morrow for Paris.’ ”

“ We knew very little of the outside world, my dears—at least, I did ; but I knew that Paris was a dangerous place to go to, and a long way off—much longer than it is now. And I had never known my father set foot out of England before in my life.

“ I saw my brother lift his cold blue eyes and fix them watchfully on my father’s face.

“ ‘ How long are you going to be away, father ? ’ I said.

“‘Long enough to get there and back again,’ he answered, shortly ; ‘a fortnight, maybe.’

“I opened my mouth to say something else, but he was smoking hard again, and his eyes were upon the empty grate ; so I went and did his bidding.

“And it was that night, my dears, that I had my dream.

“I dreamed there was a great earthquake, which shook our old house to its centre. And then there was a crash, and the walls seemed to be falling all about me. And I tried to escape, and could not. And my brother stood and mocked me, laughing at my hopeless efforts.

“Then, just as I thought all was over, my Arthur came and held out his hand, and I grasped it and knew I was saved. And I felt supremely happy—more happy than I can describe, or ever really felt except in a dream.

“Then I heard my father calling me.

“And I turned and looked, and he was standing there amidst the falling walls, and a little child was in his arms.

“A little child, who spoke out clear and loud, and said, in a commanding sort of way, that would have been most unnatural out of a dream :

“‘Mary, come and save me !’

“And I was forced to obey, my dears, even though my Arthur pulled at my hand and would not let me go. I tore away from him, and went back and took the child in my arms and held it in my bosom.

“Then the walls fell all around us, and we were in the darkness, and I could feel nothing except the warmth of the child upon my heart.

“And I awoke.

“I never forgot that dream, my dears, for it was my twentieth birthday, and the day my father went to Paris, and things happened afterwards which made it seem like a prophecy.

“In the morning my father started, on the coach beside the driver. When he got up, he said, in his stern way, looking hard at me :

“‘I shall bring some one back with me, Mary. Have a room ready.’

“My brother started slightly, looking sideways at my father’s face.

“‘A gentleman, father ?’

“‘No, a lady.’

“I dared not question further, for his heavy chin was pushed out and his under lip drawn in a little; and when he looked like that, I was silent.

“Then he stooped and kissed me, saying:

“‘No gaddings about, remember. And you, Charles, my son, mind the business and mind your sister while I am away.’

“It was hardly a fortnight before he was back again, bringing with him a young girl, almost like a child, who looked up at me with large, dark, pitiful eyes. Her face was as white as a snow-drift, and her hair, long and wavy, fell almost to her feet, when I took off the hood covering it. And my father bade us call her Louise.

“She could speak English a little, and soon learned to talk it easily. But who she was, my dears, or where she came from, I cannot tell you. The grave has long since closed over her and the secret she brought into our house. I know nothing more of her than what I shall tell you.

“She was very sad at first, and would sit hour after hour, her small hands clasped, her dark eyes looking straight before her. Once or twice I took her out with me, hoping to rouse her up a bit; but the noise and bustle of the streets seemed to terrify her. At last she refused to go altogether, saying:

“‘Let me be; I am contented here in the quiet house. I cannot bear the rush outside, and the roar and the fierce struggle for life. I have had enough of that already.’

“But once, following me round the house, she caught sight of an old spinet which had been my mother’s. And, with a loud cry, half pain and half delight, she sat down to sing and play. And she played, my dears, until I fancied the angels of God would throw open the gates of heaven only to listen.

“She grew fond of me after a bit, but she was fonder of my father, and it was strange to see how fond he grew of her. He used to let her sit at his knee, and sometimes would stroke her cheek with a kind of loving tenderness that he had never before shown to any one. At such moments my heart would come into my mouth, and hot tears into my eyes, and the ground would seem to shake under me.

“There was some one else, my dears, who used to watch them also.

"I don't know exactly how I found out that my brother loved Louise, and that she disliked him and was terrified when he approached her. The knowledge of it made me very miserable, for I knew how he could hate when he was crossed. And, sitting among them evening after evening, I used to feel as if we were all upon a barrel of gunpowder, and that if a spark fell we should be blown up, every one of us.

"And I resolved to watch them very closely, and always to stay with Louise when my father was out.

"But one day, my dears, temptation came, and I did wrong. And oh, my dears, only God knows what I had to suffer for it!

"My father had gone out for the evening, and I chanced to go to the door, and there was my Arthur waiting for me. And he told me that his father had taken him into partnership, and that in another year he was coming to fetch his wife. And he told it me in such a way, my dears, that I forgot everything but my own happiness.

"Then, all of a sudden, I remembered that I had left my brother and Louise together. And I hurried back into the house.

"But I was too late. My brother was standing in our little parlor, his face as white as ashes, and Louise was lying on the ground, the blood streaming from her mouth.

"I carried her up to bed, and sitting beside her that night, my dears, I prayed God to forgive me, and I would never leave duty for pleasure again.

"And he heard my prayer. She did not die.

"That night, in her feverish talk, I found out what had happened. 'I will not marry you,' she said, not if you kill me! Let me go; I cannot bear you to touch me.'

"She soon got better. She had broken a blood-vessel, the doctor said. Nobody knew but me what had been the cause, and I never spoke of it.

"Yet, I think my father had some uneasy suspicion that all was not right. From the day she came down again Louise was like his shadow. From that time she slept with me, and would wake up in the night, crying, 'Let me go, I cannot bear you. I will kill myself if you kiss me;' until my heart sometimes used almost to stand still with fear.

"So the summer passed, my dears, and the days began to

shorten, and I tried to forget my fears, and to think that all was right again. Yet sometimes my brother would look at Louise, as she sat on her stool at my father's feet, with a hot gaze that sent a stab right through me.

"One very cold morning in November—I remember how the wind howled in the chimney and round the corner outside the shop—my father bade Louise put on her bonnet and shawl, and then, taking her cold little hand, led her out of the house. It was so bitter cold that I ran after them with an extra comforter for Louise, and as she looked up at me I saw that she had been crying. Yet the soft touch of her little hand on my arm seemed to tell me not to be frightened.

"The tears came into my eyes too, as I stood looking after them—the old man and the girl, side by side. For my father had stooped over me and kissed my forehead, and said, in a voice almost as gentle as when he spoke to Louise:

"‘You are a good girl, Mary. God bless you!’

"They stayed away all day, and when they returned I ran out to meet them. They were coming round a corner, and he was looking down at her with a look of supreme tenderness, while her dark eyes were raised to his as, with a smile, she nestled closer to his side.

"Tea was ready, and I drew her into the room where was a blazing fire. And she threw her arms round my neck, and kissed me, and patted my hand with a pretty little air of protection quite new and strange in her.

"My brother was there too, and I wished he had not been, for his eyes were upon Louise's face with that look in them I disliked so much." And she looked so pretty!—the cold wind had brought a little color to her pale face, and her dark eyes were bright and smiling.

"After tea, my father said, suddenly, as he took the pipe I offered him:

"‘Mary, and you, Charles, my son, this lady’—he laid his hand gently on Louise's dark curls—‘has to-day become my wife. From this time’—and here he looked straight at my brother—‘she is mistress here, and your mother. You will treat her as such, remember.’

"Saying which, he put the pipe to his mouth and smoked in silence,

"If the earth had opened under our feet, I could not have been more filled with terror and surprise. I dared not look at Charles, but in the deep, deep silence which followed I could almost hear the rapid beating of his heart.

"But he said not a word. And after a minute he got up and left the room.

"Then I went over to them and said, as well as I could for crying,

"'Dear father, sweet girl-mother, I will try not to fail either in duty or respect, nor in love either, if you will have it.' And I added, sobbing,

"'And may God return upon your own head, my father, the blessing you gave me this morning, and make you very happy with your bride.'

"Then I kissed them both, and Louise's little hand was laid on mine, and her eyes spoke plainly: 'Mary, you, too, shall be happy.'

"Thus I lost again, my dears, my little bedfellow.

"Things went on just the same after my father's marriage. Louise left everything to me. And on New-Year's Day my Arthur came and had a long talk with my father, and Louise spoke up for me, and it was settled that in the fall we should be married.

"There was one change, though. My brother spent all his evenings out of the house. He never spoke to Louise, nor ever looked at her, but though I tried to believe he did, I knew he did not, forget.

"For his face would burn when my father kissed his wife, and his whole body tremble. And he grew harder every day.

"It was early in the following September that the baby was born. I remember that there had been some talk about fixing my wedding-day, and I told my Arthur that it should be whenever he liked after Louise was well again. I remember thinking about it, and of how happy I was, as I sat watching them both asleep—the young mother and her pretty baby-boy—the first baby that had ever been partly mine, and that I loved already almost as if it had been my own altogether.

"Then I had a little doze, and dreamed that my wedding-day was come, and that I was standing before the altar all in white as a bride.

"Ah, my dears, 'dream of a wedding, hear of a death.'

"I was awakened by a loud cry.

"'Mary, Mary,' said Louise, 'come and save me!'

"I looked round the room in a fright. There was a rushlight on the table near, and the fire burned brightly, and I saw there was nobody in the room but Louise, and the baby, and me.

"But Louise was sitting up in bed, and her black hair fell behind her like a pall, and her eyes were wide and staring.

"'Lie down again, my sweet,' I said, 'there is no one here; you have been dreaming.'

"'Take him away!' she screamed, and her face was red as fire, and her little hand seemed to burn mine when I touched it. 'I hate him! I cannot let him touch me!'

"I was so frightened now, my dears, that I ran to fetch the nurse, and the nurse ran for the doctor. And he came and bled her until she sank back again upon the pillow, whiter than it.

"But during the whole night she tossed, and turned, and moaned in her sleep. And when my father came she turned from him and laughed when they said he was her husband. 'My husband was young and handsome and cruel,' she said, 'and died on the guillotine.'

"And so she went on for three days.

"I was sitting alone beside her, my dears, on the evening of the third day, for the tired nurse slept, and the sight of my father seemed to make her worse. I thought she was better, for the flush on her face was gone, and her breathing was quiet.

"As I sat watching her she opened her eyes, and in her own voice, sweet as music, said:

"'I want to kiss my baby, Mary. Give him to me.'

"I lifted the child to her bosom, and she kissed him.

"And I saw a tear fall upon his head, golden already, with hair soft as silk.

"'I was not fit to have a baby,' she said, 'but you will take care of him, Mary, and love him, won't you?'

"'I will help you take care of him, Louise,' I said, trembling, for her words frightened me: 'my pretty little baby-brother, young enough to be my own.'

"She was quiet for a moment, her blue-veined white eyelids quivering; then she said,

"'How strange it seems, Mary, that you and I, both of the

same age, should have such different fates! for while your life is all before you, mine is ended.'

"'Oh, no, Louise, not yet,' I said, crying.

"'What a life mine has been!' she said, not heeding me. 'Full of unrest: false joy, false pain, and perhaps false regret; who knows?'

"'But now it will be different,' I said.

"'Now it is over,' she answered, calmly. 'God have mercy on me! Yet I was more sinned against than sinning.'

"Then she added, hurriedly,

"'Mary, promise me that you will care for my child.'

"'I promise,' I answered.

"'And now, Mary—sweet, good Mary—take me to your noble heart and let me die there.'

"I would have called my father, but she clung to me, until her clasp relaxed in death. And when the clock struck five I gently laid down her dead body and took the baby to my breast.

"And so, my dears, my dream was fulfilled."

CHAPTER XLIII.

TWO BROTHERS.

"The strawberry grows underneath the nettle;
And wholesome berries thrive, and ripen best,
Neighbored by fruit of baser quality."

Henry V.

"I DON'T know, my dears, how I could have lived through the next year but for God helping me.

"The first great grief was the knowledge that he whom I loved best could try to stand—as he did stand—between me and the solemn promise I had given to the dead girl. I begged him to wait, and he would not, and at last the conflict ceased, and he went away altogether. *My Arthur*, as I used fondly to call him, was mine no more.

"Oh, it was hard, my dears! How hard, only those who have suffered the like can know. To feel that one dearer to us than life can urge us to do wrong!—to be forgotten where we have loved!

"Then my father never rallied. He lived some years, but all pleasure in life was gone from him. He hardly ever noticed the child. And when Louis—we called the boy Louis, after his mother—was five years old, the old man died.

"He had been smoking that evening. He had turned against smoking, but that evening his beloved pipe was between his lips again. I had taken little Louis to bed, and when I came back I found that the pipe had dropped from my father's hand and his head fallen forward a little. I put my hand upon him and found that he was dead.

"The doctors said that he died from the bursting of a blood-vessel on the brain, but I think he died of grief.

"He left a strange will. He had been a great deal under my brother's influence of late years, and the lawyers said I might dispute the will if I liked. But I could not do that, my dears, even for Louis's sake.

"All was left to my brother Charles, who was to provide for me and for the boy. If I married, he was to give me a portion, and to set Louis up in business when he was old enough.

"But, really, everything was in his hands, and he could do as he liked.

"Louis had been a sickly and delicate baby. No wonder: he was nursed upon a broken heart. But when he was five years old he was the loveliest boy ever seen. His hair fell over his shoulders in golden curls; his little limbs were enchanting to look upon; and as for his eyes, I never saw any of such a brilliant, summer-sky blue, until the same eyes, only gentler, softer, looked at me from your pale face, sweet lady."

Here my nurse turned to the countess, who had been listening in breathless attention. I now saw how agitated she was; there was unusual color on her cheeks, and her lips were parted to give free egress to her quickened breath. But she spoke no word, only drew a low chair to my nurse's side and laid her fair head upon her knee.

"Oh, how I loved him, my dears, the bonniest boy that ever lived! and how I trembled for him, for I knew that my brother hated him?

"I taught him to read and write and cipher; but he taught himself to sing. He had such a glorious voice that he was chosen for the church choir; and when he sang there, his voice

rising up to the roof of the church, I used to think, as I thought of his mother, that the angels would throw open the great gates of heaven only to listen.

"He was not always good, my poor boy. He was not passionate, but had a way of saying things so as to hurt you, and he did not seem to mind much about the pain he gave. And he was secret, too, keeping his plans to himself, and sometimes so self-willed that, though my brother Charles was so hard, I could move him sooner than I could move the boy.

"I think he was about fourteen, and wonderfully clever, besides being a fine and strong boy, when my brother Charles, to my surprise, asked for him. He had never asked for him before, and took as little notice of him as if he had been a dog.

"Where's that boy?' he asked.

"He's up-stairs learning his lessons,' I said, and my heart began to beat quick; and I added,

"You look tired; have you had a busy day?' And why I said it, my dears, I dare say you can guess.

"But my little bit of pretence was of no use.

"Go and fetch him,' he said, 'I want to speak to him.'

"Of course I had to go, my dears. Louis was sitting with his elbows on the table, his hands holding his head, and his eyes fixed upon a book.

"He looked up with a frown, but, oh! he looked so bonny, his cheeks hot and red, his eyes shining, the golden curls pushed back from his white forehead.

"Do you love me, dear?' I said.

"Yes, of course,' he answered, drawing his head away with a jerk, 'when you don't bother me. Go away now, I don't want you.'

"But I want *you*,' I said; 'put down your elbows, Louis, and listen.'

"I spoke very gravely, my dears, and he put down his elbows and said, coaxingly,

"Don't be cross, Sissy. Look here, aren't these funny letters? you couldn't read this book if you were to try. It is German. Now, I don't suppose you knew even that.'

"I didn't know even that,' I said.

"Don't cry, Sissy. What a stupe you are to cry about nothing! I know you can't read it, and you don't need to, either;

but *I* can. There's a man, a friend of mine, lives near our school, and he comes from Germany, and he lent me this book, and has been teaching me German ever so long on the sly. Oh, it is jolly !'

" 'It is not like a brave boy to do anything on the sly,' I said, turning away my head to wipe a foolish tear from my eye. 'Give me the book, Louis ; I will see if it is fit for you to read.'

" 'Bah, *you* see ! You wouldn't understand a word of it, Mary, not even the letters. You are only a woman, and women are stupid creatures. 'Tis right enough for *them* to go to church, and read their Bibles, and pray to a great Nobody. It gives them something to do, and keeps them out of mischief.'

" 'Louis, Louis,' I said, more angrily than I had ever spoken to him before, 'I will not let you read a book that teaches you to talk like that. Give it to me this moment.'

" But he drew it close to him, and crossed both his arms over it, and his under lip came out beyond the upper one full and red.

" 'I sha'n't go to church any more,' he said.

" 'You are only a child,' I repeated, as firmly as I could, though my silly lip would tremble, 'and will do what you are bidden. I have given way to you too long, Louis. It was weak of me.'

" 'But I sha'n't,' he said again. "'Tis all stuff and nonsense they tell us there about God. Did you ever see him, Mary ? No, nor I, nor the man who wrote this book. If he were really God and Almighty, don't you think he could show himself to us and make us *sure* ? 'Tis easy enough to impose on a pack of old women and old maids like you, sister. But I'm too sharp to let 'em impose on me. I'm going to be a man, I am.'

" 'You are talking like a very naughty and silly boy when you say so,' I answered, trying to keep my voice steady, and not to break out into tears he would only laugh at, 'but we will speak of that another time. You must come down-stairs with me now ; your brother wants you.'

" 'My brother wants me,' he repeated, all the tune gone out of his voice, and looking up at me with a glance of surprise and alarm. Then he lifted his crossed arms from the book, and closed it, and put it in a drawer.

" 'What does he want, sister ?' he said, quite in a different voice. 'Is he angry ?'

“‘I don’t know what he wants, my dear,’ I answered. ‘But, remember this: you must not speak to him as you have been speaking to me. He has power over you, he can hurt you, punish you, if he likes; send you from home; take away all your books. Remember that, and answer him humbly. Be submissive and obedient. If not for my sake, Louis, for your own.’

“His fair face flushed a deep red as I said these words, my dears, and a shiver ran through all his body as if a cold, cold wind were blowing over him, and he drew closer to me, and whispered: ‘I had a dreadful dream once, Mary, about my brother and about you. I thought he stood opposite me with a sword in his hand, and I knew he meant to kill me; I saw the hate in his eyes. And he lifted the sword and struck with it; yet it was not I whom he killed; it was you, sister—you, whom he did not want to kill. You fell upon the ground before us, and the sword had cut your heart in two.’

“I could not help shuddering, my dears, thinking of my own dream, and of how it had been fulfilled.

“‘And I have dreamed it more than once, Mary,’ he said.

“Then he put his hand in mine as if he had been a little child again, and we went down the stairs and into the parlor at the back, where Charles was still sitting at his tea.

“‘What do you mean by keeping me waiting?’ said he, in a sharp, sharp voice, to the boy, as we went into the room. ‘My time is too important to be wasted at your pleasure. Next time I send for you, remember, you’ll come at once.’

“‘’Twas *my* fault, Charles,’ I said, pressing my boy’s hand to warn him, for the red color was fading out of his cheek, and his under lip pushed out, and his right foot firmly set, and his bonny head thrown back a little between his shoulders.

“Oh, how plainly I can see the dingy parlor once more, and we three children of one father standing there together! My father’s arm-chair, from which Charles had got up, was pushed back to its usual place beside the hearth; where, for it was a chilly autumn evening, a small fire was still glimmering. The footstool on which Louise used to sit was on the other side of it. My father’s empty pipe still hung on its rusty nail by the fireplace.

“And on the table burned a candle. And beside it lay the dog’s-eared book of figures and a stump of pencil.

“ ‘Mary,’ said my brother Charles, ‘I am speaking to the boy. Let him answer.’

“I gave Louis’s hand one squeeze again, and sat down, praying God to keep them both from wrong.

“ ‘Do you hear me?’ asked Charles, in a stern voice, looking sideways at the boy.

“ ‘You need not speak so loud,’ answered Louis. I hear well.’

“He spoke in a bold and saucy tone, my dears, which nearly made my heart stand still with fright.

“As I watched them, I was struck anew with the great difference between them. Let me tell you how they looked.

“Charles was about eight-and-thirty then, short and stout, and already rather bald. He looked sharp enough, but there was something in his blue-gray eyes you did not like to see. They seemed to warn you that he was determined to have his own way, no matter what pain he gave others. And yet something better was there, too, that made him dissatisfied and uneasy with himself.

“And I was sorry for him, too. I knew he had suffered terribly about Louise. I knew it had hardened him. If he could have learned to forgive, he would have been different.

“He was well dressed. Rather showily, but that was his taste. He always tried so hard to look like a gentleman. Poor Charles!

“And my heart ached for him, as it does now and always will, my dears. For God meant him to be different.

“But, oh, my dears, what a change when I looked from him to the boy!

“The very boys at school used to call him ‘the little lord,’ and tease him till he forced them to drop it. He was more beautiful than a picture, and the clothes upon his bonny limbs took shapes that filled you with delight. His fair hair fell back in golden curls upon his shoulders, and his cheeks were red as roses; while, as for his eyes, my dears, they were like a bit of heaven.

“And Charles stood looking at him, feeling the difference as much as I did.

“ ‘You hear well, do you?’ said he, first clenching, then slowly unclenching, his big, heavy fist; ‘you will obey well, too, I hope, for your own sake. How old are you?’

“‘He is fourteen,’ I answered, in a flurry.

“‘Let him answer for himself, Mary,’ said my brother Charles. ‘How old are you, boy?’

“‘My name is Louis,’ said my boy, ‘and my sister has already told you how old I am.’

“‘Now look you here,’ said Charles, going a step nearer to him, the veins swelling on his forehead and his fist clenched once more, ‘look you here, sirrah; if you answer me like that again I’ll—I’ll make you wish you hadn’t.’

“For a moment, my dears, I saw a look in my boy’s eyes which was a thousand times worse to see than that in the eyes of the elder. And then, perhaps in answer to my fervent prayer to God, his angry eye fell, and his fair cheek flushed a deep, deep crimson.

“‘Now you know what you’ve got to expect,’ continued Charles, drawing back again, ‘and, as you are fourteen, ’tis time you were doing something to earn the bread you eat. I’ve got an office at the other end of London—at the West End; you’ll like that, I dare say,’ he added, with a sneer; ‘and, as you can write, I suppose, you shall go there with me to-morrow, and save me a clerk.’

“‘His schooling is paid to the end of the quarter,’ I said; ‘let him go to school till then, Charles.’

“‘To learn fresh airs,’ said my brother, with a harsh laugh; ‘no, ’tis high time his spurs were cut, Mary, and the conceit taken out of him. Have him ready to go with me to-morrow; I’ll teach him from henceforth all he needs to learn.’

“And then my brother Charles turned upon his heel and went away and left us.

“I went over to my boy, but he pushed me away, and threw himself upon the floor, putting his fingers into his ears when I tried to speak.

“So I had to leave him with God.

“The next day he came down ready dressed to go with his brother.

“And Charles said one evening, when we were alone:

“‘The boy’s sharp enough, if you don’t spoil him, Mary, and he has the sense to prefer a whole skin to a broken one.’

“So I began to hope that things would go better than I feared.

“But one day Louis came home from that West End office,

where my brother seemed making such a lot of money, connected in some way with that dog's-eared book of figures, and sat down before the fire, gazing into it with the same terrible look that I had seen once before.

"How is it you are home so early, my dear?" I asked; "are you ill?"

"No," he answered, shortly. "But I've had enough of being abused for everything that's wrong, and sworn at twenty times a day. I'm never going back."

"Oh, Louis," I said, "for my sake be patient, and don't anger your brother. Soon you will be a man and can do as you like, but now he has power over you."

"If he lays his hand upon me," said my boy, "I will kill him."

"And his voice was low, but very, very clear and distinct, cutting the air like a knife."

"Before I had time to answer, Charles came in, and I knew the moment was come I had been dreading ever since my father died."

"For his face was trembling all over with anger and with hatred, and he held a leather belt in his hand and struck the air sharply with it close to my boy's head."

"For the first time in his life I saw a look in Louis's face which reminded me of his mother. It had turned quite white, and his eyes looked no longer blue, but of a deep black."

"Recall those words you spoke to me to-day," thundered Charles, "and ask me to forgive you."

"I will not recall them," said my boy.

"Recall them instantly, or I'll thrash you to within an inch of your life," said Charles again.

"But my boy only rose, crossing his arms over his chest, and stood facing him."

"Oh, my dears, I rushed between them and tried to hold back the raised right hand, but I was too late."

"For the cruel lash had fallen right across my boy's face, leaving behind a broad line of burning red."

"Then I fainted, I suppose, for I knew nothing more until the next day, when they told me that my boy was gone."

"He had left behind him a scrap of paper with a few words on it for me. They were these:

“‘If I had stayed I should have killed him, Mary. Forget me, I shall never come back.’

“And he never has, my dears. He took with him a portrait of his mother, painted on ivory. And I heard, too, that he had taken money with him from the till, but I cannot believe it.

“I was ill for many months after. When I began to go about, my brother Charles told me that he was going to be married to a great lady, the daughter of a baronet, and that he would settle on me a small annuity, so that I might live elsewhere.

“And I was glad to go, my dears. His business had prospered exceedingly at the West End, and he was very rich. And he was struggling still to become a gentleman. I should have been a drawback to him and a reproach.

“Yet once he sent for me.

“For his baby-boy was sick unto death, and he knew that I would love and care for the child. And I did, my Charley.

“And had an exceeding great reward, for you loved me.

“Thus I became nurse, only nurse, in the great house.

“I have only one wish more. Ever since I lost him, I have prayed God to send me news of my boy. And somehow I think he will. Somehow lately I have felt a sweet assurance that he will.

“And now, my dears, this about my boy is what I wanted to tell you. Many a night I have lain awake, thinking I heard him calling to me for help. I have always believed that some day he would want me. Now I am old, but you are young. Perhaps you may yet be brought together. And you will accept my legacy and befriend him and his, I am sure. And I shall die in peace, knowing it.”

CHAPTER XLIV.

MRS. OR MISS SMITH.

"Human Nature is so well disposed towards those who are in interesting situations that a young person who either marries or dies is sure of being kindly spoken of.—JANE AUSTEN (*Emma*).

As the gentle voice ceased, I rose, with an impulsive forward movement towards the dear speaker, and in another moment should have clasped my father's sister to my heart.

Aileen had known most of the story before, and, smiling through her tears, sat watching us.

But the Countess had preceded me. And I drew back. For, with sudden illumination, I put the two stories together—the stories of the simple Englishwoman and the high-born lady—and understood.

The glow upon the sweet, pale face of the lady was as bright now as the ruddy gleam of the firelight on the snow outside, her dilated blue eyes glistening under the influence of a supreme emotion.

Yet she paused still, for the quickened breath was coming fast between her parted lips, holding back the words she would have uttered.

Then she spoke; the full tones of her flexible voice, with the distinct accentuation of the foreigner, dropping like the sound of a silver hammer upon a silver bell.

"You told us just now," she said, gently stroking the rippling white hair, falling low over the placid forehead of my nurse, "that you had never seen eyes like those of your lost boy, until you saw mine. Look again at my face, dearly loved and honored friend, and tell me if any other feature there also reminds you of him.

"The mouth is not like his," said my nurse, looking up with a new light, hardly of surprise, in her loving eyes, "nor is the delicate chin. His lips were fuller; the line where they met

straighter than yours. And his chin was squarer. Yet your mouth, and chin, too, I have seen in some other face—they are like—”

She stopped, trembling.

We all felt the presence of the new thought, as it darted, quick as lightning, into her brain. We all saw the solving of the problem which had puzzled us, although at first the solution seemed impossible.

Then the countess withdrew the hand resting fondly on the silver hair, and placed it in her bosom.

I was standing as I had risen, and while I looked, marvelling, the countess drew a locket, suspended round her neck by a chain, from its hiding-place, and gave it to my nurse. She opened it with a trembling hand.

I moved a little, so that I might see too, and, leaning forward, let my eyes rest upon the portrait of a young girl, painted on ivory.

And, as I looked, the dark eyes seemed to move, and flash, and laugh, and fill with burning, passionate tears.

Then I knew it was the face of Louise.

It could hardly have been the work of a great artist; even my unpractised eye discovered great crudeness and want of finish in the execution. Yet the painter, either consciously or unconsciously to himself, had put life into the picture. As you gazed, not only the eyes, but the dewy, pouting, softly parted lips, spoke too. And they seemed to say, at least I fancied so, what they had seemed to say many years before: “Mary, you, too, shall be happy.”

Words henceforth to be a sacred trust to us!

I wonder if I can describe the face, so as to make it plain to those who saw it not.

The dusky, luxuriant hair was gathered, according to the fashion of those times, into a knot of curls on the top of the shapely little head, and fastened there with a golden comb over which a hundred little ringlets rippled. The hair was thickly powdered. The small oval face, which should have been left pale, as Nature made it, was brightened into fictitious and incongruous bloom by means of the rouge-pot. The features were irregular and not at all critically beautiful—the line of the nose, with its delicately arched nostrils, anything but Grecian, the

whole face too unfilled and sharp in outline. There was not the shadow of a dimple on it except where the forefinger of a tiny hand pressed the left cheek.

I can say all this, but how can I describe the sensations which this unfinished face awakened; how explain that this very want of art pleased more than the utmost finish would have done, and that the glorious eyes, shedding their wonderful light over all, threw defects into deepest shadow?

How can I describe, either, the effect of it upon my aunt?

But the countess sank upon her knees, throwing her arms around the trembling figure of the sweet woman who had been the guardian angel of us all, and drawing the dear head with its rippling silver covering to her warm young bosom, while warm tears fell upon it.

"He told me about you, dearest," she said, "and repented, I trust, the bitter wrong he had done you. Let me atone for his sin. From henceforth my life belongs to you."

We never told my aunt the details of the story of Louis l'Anglais. She knew that he had risen to great honor, and that he was dead. She knew, too, that she had got his daughter for her very own, and that this daughter was good as an angel.

CHAPTER XLV.

A DESERTED HOUSE.

"O Henry! always striv'st thou to be great
By thine own act—yet art thou never great
But by the inspiration of great passion.
The whirl-blast comes, the desert sands rise up
And shape themselves: from earth to heaven they stand,
As though they were the pillars of a temple,
Built by Omnipotence in its own honor!
But the blast pauses, and the shaping spirit
Is fled: the mighty columns were but sand,
And lazy snakes trail o'er the level ruins!"—COLERIDGE.

It is good for a man going to woo—good for him, and for his future happiness—that he should do it in fear. The woman who gives herself away before she is asked puts a rod

into the hand of her future husband, which he would be more than human not to make occasional and sharp use of. It is good for her, too, therefore, to use the time of her supreme power well and wisely, teaching him the lesson he will learn so easily now, and rebel against so pugnaciously hereafter—the lesson of subjection. For love, if it is to teach anything, must teach *that*. Ay, to the man, too, assuredly, as well as to the woman. Continual subjugation of a once paramount *ego*, continual offerings up on the altar of self-sacrifice, continual and glad bearing of pain to save the loved one, is the very life-blood, the very essence, of “true love” as opposed to “passion.” Passion we have in common with the brutes; love we have in common with God.

And if ever a man went to woo filled to the brim with the passionate fear of rejection, it was I. Every mile I journeyed on the road to Switzerland seemed to add a new drop to the cup of my fear, until it poured over. What though Thérèse had, her own true self, told me that she loved me! The very fact that she had done so unsolicited was absolute proof of her certainty in the impossibility of a union. The words had been wrung from her agonized lips beside the death-bed of hope.

And her father, honest William; he, too, stood erect among the obstacles I conjured up—a very mountain of opposition. When his heart, casting aside the trammels of conventionality, had spoken burning words to mine, there had been no response, or, rather, only a false one. The real cries my heart had uttered had been inarticulate, smothered under the infernal hand of some Rimmon, before whose altar, like Naaman of old, I had still bowed down and worshipped; choosing rather to wash and be clean in Abana and Pharpar than in the heavenly stream of Jordan.

Even the elements, so I thought, were against me. Heavy snow blocked the passes, so that I had to fight my way to Brunnen inch by inch. Yet my hopes rose somewhat when, mounting the little hill to Gütsch, I caught sight of the Schenke—almost marvelling to see it still standing—and began to realize that, in another few minutes, I should see, touch, feel the life-giving presence of my Thérèse.

But there was no song issuing from the Schenke; no pleasant murmur of human voices through the keen, snow-impregnated

air; no human breath coming forth to warm and nourish me. I looked aghast at the low, long wooden building, once so full of life, now horribly advanced in the first stage of dissolution. Stones had fallen from its roof and impeded my progress; untrodden snow lay thick around its deserted portal; a loosened shutter, flapping in the wind, fell against its side with a dull thud like earth upon a coffin; its uncurtained eyes were wide, but dimmed and sightless; its door, like a dead mouth, which will never smile again, hopelessly closed. I had opened my yearning arms to clasp a living being to my heart, and—oh, nightmare of horror!—they enclosed a stiffened corpse.

I went round the deserted building a dozen times; burning hot under the fiery touch of a passionate pain, which rendered me insensible to the intense cold; hoping ever that I was but the sport of a cruel optical delusion, too horrible to be true. I stilled the furious throbbing of my pulse to listen at its empty portal, to peer frantically into its sightless orbs.

In vain, in vain! No glad discovery lightened my hopelessness; no sound was to be heard but the sullen lapping of the ice-bound lake below, the fierce, hungry cry of a passing bird of prey, and that dull thud upon the coffin wherein lay, heart to heart, my hope and love.

Then I sat down upon the stone bench outside the window, and covered my face with my hands.

I know not how long I sat thus alone with my despair, but after a long silence I heard a living thing beside me. And I lifted my aching eyes to see what it was.

I knew it instantly, and thrust out indignant hands to ward it off.

For I hated it, the elfish thing—the fruit of a man's evil passion and a woman's dishonor. Again I heard the words of its horrible incantation:

“My mother bound a rod for you long ago. I mean to come and look on when she uses it, and listen to your cries, and laugh to think how little they will help you—for I hate you, I hate you.”

Relentless prophecy! relentless fulfilment! The bound rod was in requisition now, forcing, even from my proud manhood, loud cries of agony; and she was there—this thing in mortal mould, but surely never mortal—looking on.

The full cup of our pain runneth over—its last drop bitter as death—when we know that it is nectar to another!

“Avaunt, Mieschen! Avaunt, child of sin!”

But she did not go; on the contrary, she drew nearer, clambered to my knee, put her elfish arms about my neck, her fiery hair falling warm over my shoulder, laid her elfish head upon my breast.

“Does it hurt very much, Herre?” she said.

There was no exultation in her voice; rather was it modulated into a weird, yet sweet, plaint of sympathy. And she clung closer to me, and put her pale lips up to mine.

“You are glad to know that it does, Mieschen; you are come to enjoy it.”

“No, Herre; no, no, no! I am sorry. She shall not hurt you any more—my mother, the Wind—and I will find you something to take away the smart.”

“You can tell me, perhaps—” I began, eagerly.

“Where your enemy is?—yes! It will do you good to know that he is dead.”

“What enemy?”

“Have you forgotten so soon, Herre? You are not like me. I remember wrong forever. I never forget it.”

“Till it is avenged, I suppose?”

“It never is avenged, Herre, till my enemy is dead. Why do you weep still? *Sei froh und guter Dinge.*”

“I want something better than revenge, Mieschen; something you cannot give me.”

“But revenge is very sweet, Herre; sweeter far than honey-cakes. My grandmother has the rheumatism now, and cannot beat me. I am glad not to be beaten, but I am gladder still to hear her cry out and groan and moan.”

“You are a naughty girl, Mieschen. Get down from my knee. You deserve to be beaten.”

“I will get off in a minute, and take you to a stove, where you can warm yourself. Look down upon the lake, Herre; you were nearly drowned in it once.”

“Yes.”

“And he was quite drowned in it—quite. Drowned as dead as a stone. I looked on and saw him die, Herre, and did not care to help him, because of the beautiful lady and the good

Frenchman—the only one who never spoke a hard word to me, except—”

“Except who?”

“I will tell you presently, Herre. Don’t cry, your tears hurt me. You must give me a kiss to take away the pain. What, you won’t? My mouth is not like hers, as sweet and soft and red as a ripe cherry. Never mind! no kiss, no good news.”

“It is no good news to me that he is dead.”

“Not? I do not understand that. The English are, indeed, a curious people, as all the world says they are. You cut as wry a face as if the news were medicine. Well, I will give you some honey to take away the taste, if you will give me a kiss.”

“I’ve no time to spare.”

“You are in a terrible hurry to go and look for somebody. But, Herre, if you go without a guide you will lose your way.”

“Can you guide me?”

“I fancy so. And I knew that you would come back, though every one else said you wouldn’t. Even Peter’s Nick, who stood up for you at first, says now that, but for wife and child, he’d walk barefoot to England only to show you how he can handle a cudgel. Yesterday, when the news came from Lucerne—never mind what news—I heard him say, ‘It will shorten my life not to be able to give the liar the hiding he deserves.’ You’d better not go to the village, Herre; Peter’s Nick won’t want to kiss you.”

“If I avoid the village, it will not be for fear of Peter’s Nick.”

“Wait, Herre, just a moment. It was in the night he came, the wicked prince, all alone in a boat, from Lucerne. Nobody saw him but me, for every one else was in bed and asleep. I grew tired of listening to my grandmother’s moans and laughing at them, so I dressed myself and went down to the lake.”

“Go on.”

“It was calm as a pond, Herre, and looked as if it were dead. I was going home again, for it made me shiver, when I saw a boat gliding softly over the water.”

“Well?”

“I was frightened, Herre, and hid myself, and the boatman came on so softly that I thought he must be only a dream. Then he lifted his face to the pale moon, and I saw that he was the wicked prince who had murdered the good Frenchman. His

cheek was white as the ashes, Herre, which fall under the stove, and the rest of his body was as black as the altar-pall on Good Friday."

I began to listen intently, in spite of my anxiety about Thérèse.

"All the world slept, Herre, but him and me, and I was afraid of him, and slunk back in my hiding-place. My mother, the Wind, slept too, and the only ripple on the water was against the keel of his boat."

"Quick, child, tell me all."

"I am going to tell you, Herre. He got out and moored his boat—such a little one!—to our pier. Then he stood still, looking round, his long cloak covering up all but his face, his lips moving. And he sighed, Herre, such a big sigh, and clasped his hands, and looked up to the sky with a face like Wieschen Kuhle's when she died."

"Quick, quick; I am in a hurry, Mieschen."

"So am I, Herre, for if I do not get home in time I shall be beaten. Fleurette lives with us now, and beats me when my grandmother cannot. He stood a long time like that, the wicked prince, till my teeth began to chatter, and then he turned his eyes, which looked like two burning coals, towards the village, and up the hill to Gütsch, and through the wood.

"And all of a sudden, while I was looking, he threw up his arms and cried out loud: 'Oh, my Käthchen, I did it all for love of thee! Come back to me, or I shall die!'"

The child—if she were a child and not an elfin changeling—put into these words a tone of such poignant anguish that my own pain was swallowed up in the intenser pain of another. Hot tears of compassion for one who had done me the most cruel wrong that one man can do his fellow dropped from my burning eyes on the fiery locks of the child. In the freemasonry of suffering I forgot that we were mortal foes; I only remembered that he was a man, fashioned like unto myself.

"It was when he got up, Herre," continued Mieschen, "that he first saw me, and pulled me out from behind the stone, and shook me till my teeth chattered and I hardly knew whether I were alive or dead.

"'Who sent thee here?' he said.

"'Nobody, *gnädiger Herr*,' I sobbed, for his hands, though soft and white as yours, Herre, gripped me till I could hardly

help screaming out with the pain; 'and if my grandmother knew I had gone out without leave she would only beat me.'

"'Beat thee. *Tausendsacrament!* I've a great mind to beat thee in her stead—*bis dein Zünglein auf ewig verlernt hat Geheimnisse zu verrathen.* If I thought thou wast a spy, I'd twist thy tongue out of thy mouth, strangle thee with these red locks of thine, and throw thee into the lake.'

"I could not speak for trembling, Herre, and was afraid to move or cry, with his great eyes upon me. And I could not turn them away, either; it was like as if he had fastened them to his. And oh! I wished I had been good and stayed at home with my grandmother, for I thought he was going to kill me as he killed the good Frenchman.

"'Speak,' he said; '*sprich, rothhaarige Teufelin.*'

"'I'm not a spy, *gnädiger Herr,*' I answered, 'nor a devil either; only little Mieschen, who never had a father like the others; and my mother is the Wind, and people say I am mad.'

"'They say I am mad, too, child,' he answered; 'but it is a cursed lie. They tried to keep me from coming back, but I outwitted them. Tell me, is there a lady in the village, beautiful as an angel?'

"'There is Thérèse,' I said.

"He raised his hand to strike me, Herre; but let it fall again and was silent.

"'I mean a stranger,' he said, after a while.

"'There was, *gnädiger Herr*; but she is gone away with the Englishman.'

"For a moment, Herre, I really thought he was going to kill me, and I shut my eyes and screamed as loud as I could.

"But he only pushed me from him, so that I fell and hurt myself.

"'Look,' he said. 'I am going to tie thee fast, and if thou screamest again, I will beat thee to death. Be sure of that; what I say, I do, always. I am Prince Eberhard of Pöbeldowski, and men go softly in my presence, and thank me for gracious punishment. I was born to be a ruler: my mother said so. Listen, child, she—*she* said it first, and he was strong and brave and good, and hatred glanced off from him—he would not die. I beat a dog to death once—a dog white as snow, red as blood—and I loved it, but I hated him more. He sent me

back a collar in a bloody handkerchief, and with words of fire. Oh, I knew that every blow fell upon his heart! Whist! lie down, Donna—*kusch dich, Unthier!* thou art dead. The Frenchman is dead too. The bullet pierced him. I saw him fall and die, and Fear I never knew before rose up from his wound and chased me through the wood and down the hill-side, making me forget even her. It has chased me ever since—the grisly monster! it is coming over the water now—dost see it?—pale, as ashes red with the blood of many. Down, Donna, down, I tell thee! It is my child, sayest thou?—has my eye, my lip, my brow? It is false; it is Desperation, the unhallowed offspring of Memory, and it is dead, cold and dead in a quiet pool; and the Englishman shall die. Brother, it was an accident—all the world said it was an accident, and she—*she* said so too. Thou wast buried as befitted a prince, and we put on mourning for thee and would not be comforted. *Kusch dich, Donna.* Down, I tell thee, *Satanshund!* ”

“Did he say all that, Mieschen?” I inquired, shuddering.

“Every word, Herre; I never forget. And he said more, too, oh, much more, but it was in a tongue I could not understand! But when he had bound me to the pier, he turned to go to the wood, and then he cried out again in our language: ‘I am coming for thee, Käthe: I know where I laid thee, *Schätzchen*. All the way from Hungary I come, where they wanted to keep me. They bound me—their prince—with cords! They threatened me with a whip! They said I was mad, but I was wiser than they. I broke loose from them and found my way back to thee!’ ”

“What happened next, Mieschen?” I cried, with burning impatience.

“He had strapped me round the waist to the pier, Herre, and, though my arms were free, the knot was tight, and I couldn’t loosen it. And the night was bitter cold, and only a few stars gave a dim light, for the young moon grew tired of shining and went to bed again. I dared not scream, either, for I knew if I did he would keep his word and beat me to death, and my mother, the Wind, slept on, and the quiet water dared not move for fear of her, and nobody cared for poor little Mieschen, or whether she lived or died.”

“Did he come back again?”

“Yes, Herre, but he was gone a long, long time, and the

Morgenstern was shining when I heard his footfall; and a pale gleam of light fell down on Uri Rothstock, and I knew it would soon be day. But I was stiff with cold, and hardly minded his cruel threats any more, for beating, even if it hurt, would also warm me. I had unmoored his boat—I could just reach it, and it had floated a little back from the pier, but not far; there was neither wind nor wave to drive it.”

“Did he speak to you?”

“No, Herre, not a word. I think he had forgotten that I was there. But though now the red morning light fell full upon his face, it still looked white as ashes; and oh, how he trembled and shook! Then he sighed, as I never heard any one sigh before, and sprang for the boat, which had gone back from the pier a good boat’s length.”

“And missed?”

“No, Herre; the boat shook under his weight, but he soon righted her, and would have got away safely only that an oar slipped from his frozen fingers, and in trying to reach it he capsized the boat and fell into the water.”

“And was drowned?”

“Not yet, Herre. He could swim; and in a few minutes he had righted the boat again, and was getting into her, when he seemed to see something inside which frightened him so much that he let her loose again, and cried out, like a madman, ‘*Kusch dich, Donna!*’ and, ‘Thou, too, my enemy? thou also come back from hell?’ Then he covered his face and sank, and I saw him no more; but I saw something else, Herre.”

“What?”

“Something white in the boat, and some one holding it. Two shadowy figures, like a dog and a man. And they looked fierce and threatening; yet while I watched them, dumb with fear, they melted into air. Don’t be angry with me, Herre; I cannot help it. I see strange things sometimes, and when I tell others of them they say I am mad.”

“Strange, unearthly creature, tell me the rest.”

“There is not much more to tell, Herre. When the boat, empty again, floated towards me, the terrible hand upon my mouth was taken off, and I cried out, and cried again until all the mountains gave back the echo. But our men—Peter’s Nick and the brave Englishman from Gütsch—came too late to save

him, though they tried hard. Yet, if they had saved him, they would only have given him up to the gendarmes at Lucerne. As for me, I cannot forget that awful look upon his face when he saw the shadows of the man and the white dog, and gave up the struggle."

I was silent. The child was silent too, and clung to me, trembling, and hid her elfish head upon my breast.

"Did they ever find the body, Mieschen?"

"Our lake would not keep it, Herre. Our lake cast it out of her mouth. About a week afterwards they found it floating against the pier, and a great Herr came all the way from Hungary to fetch it, and to carry it away."

"And were you beaten, Mieschen?"

"No, Herre; my grandmother forgot, and Fleurette, too, to beat me that day."

"And now, Mieschen, take me to Thérèse."

"I will take you to my grandmother's, and you shall warm your hands, which are cold as ice, and I will warm mine, for they, too, are as cold almost as they were that dreadful night."

"No, Mieschen; first tell me—"

"Where she is, and how she is, Herre? Well, she is alive and well, but you cannot go to her to-day."

"Why, Mieschen?"

"Because she is at Lucerne."

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE SISTER EVELINE.

"Wüsst ni't anzufange'
Bin zum Herrn Gott gange'
'Darf ich Dierndel liebe'?' hab' ich g'fragt;
'Ei, jo freili', 'sagt er, und hat g'lacht;
Wegen's Buerbel hab, ich's Dierndel g'macht.'"

UNFORTUNATE Mieschen! Child sent, apparently, into the world only to furnish it with a sentient body for the raised stick of Retribution, which *must* fall somewhere. Now I could have beaten thee myself.

Yet what mattered it that an imp hung upon my coat-tails,

that my weary feet were full of pins and needles, that I had to retrace the snow-covered road by which I had come to Brunnen, that my hopes were indefinitely deferred? My greatest dread had been baseless. Thérèschen was at Lucerne!

On our way to the village we met Peter's Nick.

He came on slowly, the deep frown upon his low forehead resting so heavily upon his eyes as to elongate them beyond precedence. His lips, too, were compressed almost into a line, and in his right hand he swung a cudgel strong enough to have prostrated a Goliath. He came on steadily, his narrowed eyes—directed straight towards mine from under the pent-house of a brow which meant satisfactory explanation or condign punishment—saying, plainer than any spoken words, "Thou art the man."

Truly, but for a conscience at peace with God, I might have fled in dismay before Peter's Nick.

"*Guten Tag*, Nick," I said, trying to induce my blue lips to smile reassurance, and pushing away little Mieschen, who flung her wizened arms around me. "How are you, old fellow?"

"They told me you were here, Herre," he answered, without returning my greeting, and now so close to me that I could feel his hot breath on my cold cheek. "The landlord at the 'Golden Lion' said so himself. And I went home and fetched this *Prügel*" (looking at his formidable weapon), "and came out to have a bit of talk with you, *auf Deutsch*, Herre."

"Is that the German way, Nick, of welcoming a friend?"

"No, Herre. It is the German way of giving liars and them that make false promises a taste of the fire that never shall be quenched. It is the German way of welcoming a *Hundsfott*—a blackguard."

"Take care what you say, Nick; take care!"

"I am going to take care, Herre. I am going to find out why you went away without keeping your word, and why you've come back again; and if you can't give me a good reason for both I'm going to thrash you like a dog. Mieschen, *geh nach Hause*; the supper waits for thee, and the *Grossmutter* also. I have a word to speak to the *Engländer*."

"I will not go," she sobbed; "I will not let you hurt him. He is good."

"Nick," I said again, almost imploringly, putting back the thin arms of the child as gently as I could, but in a decisive

manner, which checked both her sobs and her struggles; "Nick, let me speak first, and then, if you think I deserve it, I will stand as still as Uri Rothstock to receive any chastisement you choose to inflict."

"Herre," he replied, angrily, throwing down his cudgel, "you disarmed me once with a blow, and now with a word, or, rather, with a look in your eyes which, if it be false, is falser than the devil himself, and might even deceive the Holy Mother of God. Tell me why you are come, and why you went—in silence."

"I am come, Nick, to rob Switzerland of its brightest jewel and take it back to England."

"And a cudgel is good for a thief," he replied, his compressed lips and eyes arching themselves a little.

"True, and you shall use it as freely as you like on the thief's back, *if* you like, when I have spoken."

"Well, Herre, now why did you go—*schweigend*?"

"Because I have a father, Nick."

"And you went to fetch a *Jawort*; I understand *now*. But, Herre, you never told us that. You left us to wear away our hearts in doubt and ignorance."

He spoke half reproachfully, yet advanced to shake my hand.

"She is at Lucerne," he said, "and we will go there together this day."

We did go. We fought our way back there inch by inch. Had the snow been deeper, the wind fiercer, the heaven blacker, we should have reached it still.

I, also, understood now. I no longer asked myself the question as to "whether the fellow had dared—?" With a contrite heart I did homage to the loftiness of a love based on entire self-renunciation, and accepting gratefully in return, unconscious of its supreme humility, a few crumbs of common kindness, a bright smile or two, the remembrance of a childish kiss. He, not I, had bared his own brave and tender heart for her to mount to happiness.

It was long past midnight when we reached Lucerne.

The pallid winter-morning sun was shining upon the drifted snow when Nick roused me from a sleep of profound exhaustion, deep as that of Eutychus.

I asked no question, and Nick proffered no explanation, as

he led me into a narrow street, where the manes of twenty generations seemed to rise from moss-covered stones to protest against our purpose.

For this spot was sacred to those who have forsworn marriage.

Here, for many a hundred years, holy men, or such as claimed the adjective, had walked and lived and persecuted and suffered, each in turn passing away forever.

Here, for many a hundred years, dark eyes, full of the lust of power, had looked askance from under cowls at a kneeling multitude.

Here still, as in days of yore, men housed and prayed who had abjured the love of woman for the love of God; and women abandoned a natural destiny to become the brides of Christ.

And it was here that *I* came to seek a wife.

The houses we passed were all of massive stone, ornamented with images, some roughly hewn, some out of whose petrified eyes a living soul still flashed upon you. Carved upon the portal where we halted was a female face upraised and full of so vivid an expression that the cold stone seemed to become incarnate as you gazed. The innocent eyes were wide, the lips smiling.

Ay, smiling still, although they had been petrified long before the artist had hewn them in stone. The face had been raised in childish light-heartedness to hear or see something too terrible to allow the features to relax—something which had stiffened into eternal life a ghastly death, leaving a murdered smile upon the lips forever.

Beyond this portal an iron door slowly opened to our request to be allowed to enter. A woman was the portress. She was clothed in sombre black from head to foot. Her passionless face was indicative of nothing now but submission; her eye sullen, like that of an animal once fierce and furious, but long since reduced to crouching and licking obedience. I have seen faces like hers—always female ones, but not always in the garb of nuns—in the streets of many a Continental city, ay, and on the pavements of free London, half-and-half saints, if unwilling martyrdom constitute a claim to holiness; subdued under an iron heel, but only after having learned the futility of rebellion; kissing the rod, because fearing it so intensely.

Her bloodless lips moved. We stooped to listen.

“Was ist euer Begehr?”

"We would humbly crave permission to speak a word to the sainted mother," said my spokesman.

Without another word (how many unspoken words must have risen to those pale lips, to die there hopeless captives!) the woman led us along a narrow stone passage, terminating in a small circular room, from which a rough stone staircase, worn by thousands of dead feet, wound itself up into dark and mysterious regions above. The only thing in this room was a gigantic crucifix, upon which the Son of God still hung and suffered and thirsted for water, which no man gave unto him.

The door closed upon us. I fancied I heard the lock slip into its place with a sound like a secret spring. I felt a vague terror, as if I were myself a prisoner. I looked aghast at Nick, who reverently crossed himself and then stood with bowed head as in a sanctuary.

We waited long. No sound broke the terrible silence, which, shared with that divine sufferer on the accursed tree, seemed eternal. I hardly breathed, I know, and Nick stood like an image of stone.

Then the door was opened gently again, and another black-robed figure slowly entered and stood before us, at sight of whom both Nick and I fell upon reverential knees to do involuntary obeisance.

I am no Roman Catholic, nor have I any leaning to the faith of the Papists. I believe its distinguishing tenets to contain supreme errors; I believe its teaching calculated to destroy the free life of true religion, comprehensible alike to the sage and to the babe; but I knew that in this woman I saw a saint. I was certain that the dark eyes, looking fearlessly and candidly and lovingly upon us, knew nothing of deceit or hypocrisy. Love to God and man sat enthroned in each; love made perfect through suffering, and flooding the pale face with divinest sunlight.

"*Gnädige Frau*," said Nick (I know not whether the form of address was conventional, and I am sure he did not—he only used, as I should have done, the *highest* form he was cognizant of)—"*Gnädige Frau*, we want—*der Englische Milord und ich*—we want your gracious permission to see and speak with a maiden from Brunnen, who came to claim your protection about a month ago."

"You mean the one we call Sister Eveline?"

The voice was as low as the gentle murmur of a clear brook in the serene silence of a summer's eve, as full of mystical, unspoken communication, and as sweetly sorrowful.

"I mean the Sister Eveline."

The lady before us—emphatically a lady, whether by earthly noble birthright, or by the patent of God—was silent for a moment, and looked searchingly at me. Nick continued—oh, how slowly—how slowly!

"*Gnädige Frau*, it is good to give one's self to the service of God, yet sometimes—tell us, has she already taken the vow?"

Again a few seconds of palpitating silence. I knew—I knew, that my destiny—my life—my existence—hung upon this lady's lips. And my heart broke out into those words of Israel's—words of submission wrung out of him at the acme of desolation: "If I am bereaved, I *am* bereaved."

"She was to have taken the vow of the novitiate this morning; but, for certain reasons, it was deferred until to-morrow."

"*Nun lobet alle Gott!*" said Nick, fervently, breaking out into the gladdest pæan he knew of.

As for me, I only laughed. And let those who do not understand marvel at my levity.

"Will you let us see her, *gnädige Frau*?" continued Nick, my indefatigable mouthpiece.

"She has gone to visit a sick child—I fear a dying one," said the Lady Superior; "we like them to enter early on the blessed work. But you may go and meet her; she is in the Godehardi-Strasse, in the house of one Josef Aufdermauer."

"I know him," cried Nick, now as eager as I.

We were passing out again, after another reverent salute, when a soft hand was laid upon my arm, and soft, dark eyes looked anew searchingly into mine.

"You are going to rob us of one of our most promising novices," said the Lady Superior, in that thrilling, heart-searching voice of hers; "and, monsieur, I would give her to you with all my soul, but I fear you are a heretic."

"I am a Protestant," I answered.

Nick had already crossed the threshold, but her soft hand was still upon my arm—stronger in its power of detention than any man's would have been.

“And you will try to seduce her from the true faith?”

“I shall try to lead her into it, *meine Gnädige*; though, if we get to heaven, what matter how, or by what road?”

“Go,” she said, heaving a deep sigh; then quickly added: “I had a friend like you, once, oh, just like you, when you boldly announced yourself a Protestant, and that you would try to lead her to your own faith! and I renounced him for God.”

“And never regretted it, *gnädige Frau*?”

“Go. Your eyes are just like his, bold and blue and fearless, and yet luminous and tender when we spoke of her. And she will yield to them and let you rule her. I have no power to hold her. I ought to wish I had; *dessenungeachtet*—”

“You sigh, and your eyes are wistful, *gnädige Frau*. If you had to choose again—”

“I would choose as I have chosen. What are regrets, what are vain earthly aspirations, compared to the approbation of God? I am happy. I am beloved; and my Eternal Bridegroom sitteth on the right hand of the Father.”

Her upturned face, her wide eyes, her pure mouth, were all smiling—like the stone ones outside. I shall never see her again, except, maybe, in heaven, but I see that look often. I see it now as plain as ever, and am filled anew with marvelling pity, with undying indignation. Yet, if we get to heaven, shall we think it worth a thought, whether the road there was covered with verdant moss, or rough with stones which drew blood at every footstep? Is not happiness sublimer when it has been purchased with pain?

CHAPTER XLVII.

A MOMENTOUS QUESTION.

"In my far country there's a sweet belief,
The gods first fashioned double every soul,
And then divided; from that time till now,
One half must ever seek its other half,
Through land and sea, and if the search be blessed
They join again, the parted souls, and live
Henceforth as one."

Translated from GRILLPARZER (Das goldene Vliess).

"And our spirits rushed together at the touching of the lips."

TENNYSON.

I SAW her first (Peter's Nick says he did, but it is false), the darling! without whom my life would have been a complete failure—a mutilated and useless half.

I saw her first; warned by the rapid beating of my heart that she was coming—her pretty feet choosing out, in unconscious daintiness, the cleanest places in the dirty street; her head drooping a little; her sweet mouth sorrowfully firm; her dark eyes solemn still at the remembrance of the dead boy upon whom they had last rested.

And I looked at her, all my heart in my eyes, until at last she raised her drooping lids, and sent forth one of her soft, mysterious, ever-changing glances, to meet mine.

We were alone, for Peter's Nick had discreetly vanished into space.

And so we stood and gazed at each other.

She was changed. Oh, my heart smote me at sight of her pallor! And her wonderful eyes looked as if they had wept much since we parted.

But never before had I seen her look half so beautiful.

"Thérèse," I said.

The hot color rushed to her face at the sound of my voice.

Her whole body trembled. Instinctively she put her hand before her face.

"Thérèse," I said again, and my voice was choked and toneless. "Thérèse, speak to me."

But she could not, she could not. The color which had suffused her face was rapidly disappearing again, and her limbs shook under her. She put out her hand as if to repulse me.

As if to repulse me! Well, did I not deserve it?

I went a little nearer. I took her cold hand.

"Thérèse. Are you so sorry to see me?"

"Monsieur, is it really you?" she gasped.

"Do I look like a ghost, Thérèse?"

"No, but—"

"But what?"

"But—"

Even her lips were white now, white as death. Yet she struggled still, with passionate determination, to regain her composure.

"I did not think—"

She could not finish the sentence, but she withdrew her hand—the hand which had touched mine so coldly and nervelessly—and leaned heavily against a wall.

I protest that I wanted to save her pain, but I had no power even to tell her why I had come. I had no power. I had disdained her love when I might have had it. How could I ask for it now? And the pain at my heart sickened me. It was evident that she was not only startled and terrified, but also full of indignation.

I thought she would have fallen, but her high spirit struggled against the humiliation of that, and struggled successfully. And very soon she put her resolute little foot upon the neck of her passionate pain, and her lip was bleeding from the cruel curb of the pitiless white teeth.

"Monsieur," she said, with dignified hauteur, "if you will fetch me a fiacre I will thank you. I have been nursing a sick child, who died just now. The remembrance of it makes me—I am not—not—well. I fear I—*Lieber Gott*, how can you stand there looking at me like that, when you know—"

She broke off again, profoundly agitated. And now hot tears were oozing through the fingers pressed convulsively to her face.

"Oh, *mein Vater*," she sobbed, "*mein Vater*, come back to me? I cannot bear it!"

I could not bear it either. For now Thérèse laughed—that kind of laugh *sifflé* which sounds like the rending of tightened heart-strings. I sprang forward. I clasped her to my heart.

"Go," she said, vehemently, wrenching herself from my embrace. "Go back to her."

I began to understand.

"How dare you—you, whose faith belongs to another—how dare you venture to touch me! I had begun to learn resignation. I had begun to find peace in the convent—

"And now," she continued, almost fiercely, "you come back to undo all, and I have no strength to go through it again. *Gott sei mir gnädig!* I must die."

"Oh, Thérèse, let me speak!"

"Speak? What have you to say to Thérèse now? Are we not separated forever? Would I have written to you, if I had thought—oh, the—shame of it is killing me!"

"Thérèse, Thérèse, I love you."

She flashed round upon me. If I had had one ignoble thought that moment, the fire of her hot contempt would have scorched me to death.

She had drawn back a few paces. Her very wrath gave her fresh strength. She stood looking at me, and her eyes were as the eyes of an omniscient judge.

If I had had one contemptible or ignoble thought at that moment, I must have fled. But, though my heart seemed literally breaking, I kept my ground, and met her angry, burning gaze as steadily as I could. And then I saw her eyes softening and filling, and a faint ray of hope entered into my soul.

"Where is she?" she asked; "are you tired of her already?"

"Thérèse, as truthfully as if we were both before the judgment seat, I never loved her, nor she me."

She did not move, but her eyes softened more and more. And a radiant light began to shine through them.

"Yet you thought—"

"Yes, I *thought*, Thérèse. I had not learned then what true love meant. I know now."

The radiant light in her eyes deepened and brightened.

"Oh, monsieur, if you only knew—"

"I know this, Thérèse, that it depends on you to-day to make me blessed beyond words to express, or to send me back to England a broken-hearted man."

"Are you quite sure, monsieur, that you really love me—that it is not pity?"

"Thérèse, did you ever love any one?"

"Oh, monsieur!" And now her face was crimson.

"Will you come home with me, Thérèse? Will you make a home for me? Without you I shall be everlastingly homeless."

"Did you come back to Switzerland for that, monsieur—only for that?"

"Only for that." And now I opened my arms.

"Thérèse, will you come?"

And she came.

After all that had stood between us, she was mine at last—mine for evermore.

What more did we say to each other? Upon my life I cannot tell you, though we remained together for hours. I have asked Thérèse, and she declares, laughing a little and blushing a good deal, that she too has forgotten.

Yet she knows perfectly well every word her other lovers said, and remembers literally all the compliments they paid her. The *Herr Lehrer* talked like a book; and Hans sank down upon his two knees at once, but then he was a poet, and, sooth to say, somewhat of a *Gimpel*, and had to be pulled up again rather ignominiously.

"Ay, I'll be bound you made the poor fellow smart. The 'twice blessed attribute of mercy' is unknown to women."

Well, who could help laughing? But she hadn't laughed at the gallant officer. That was a performance to gaze at in speechless admiration. "Look, monsieur, it is never too late to learn."

And Thérèse sinks gracefully upon one knee, with ludicrous care for an imaginary and very tight uniform, and clasps two little hands, and lifts a woe-begone countenance; the pathos thereof turned into bathos by the twinkle in her mischievous eyes.

"Good gracious! I thank my stars that you've forgotten my performances. Is that the barbarous way in which you

heartless women show up to a mocking world the sorrows of rejected lovers?"

"‘Show up,’ monsieur? Only to my *Mann*, and only for his instruction. Oh, me! when I come to reflect, I can’t imagine how I ever could have been so foolish as to give him a No. Besides his elegance and his uniform—he was *Uhlán*—he had a *Schloss* in Mark Brandenburg and a *von* before his name! *Ach!* I should have been a *gnädige Frau!*"

"Instead of the hard-worked wife of a poor foreign correspondent in dismal London. I appreciate your regret, Thérèse, but can only offer the additional aggravation that it was your own fault."

"Exactly, monsieur, and therefore I bear it with as much patience as I can."

After which, she comes penitently to kiss away the shadow on my brow—for the life of me I cannot help it! I know, I know it is all fun and nonsense, yet the bare idea, that the confinement of her present life may sometimes weigh upon my treasure, reared in the freedom of the Swiss mountains, is something so like pain as to be hardly distinguishable from that sensation. And this occasional phantom of a fear, with absolutely nothing substantial behind it—I am certain of that—is the one mote in my sunshine, the one bitter drop in a cup of almost heavenly sweetness. Outside troubles we have too, of course, but those we share together, and, in sharing, hardly feel, or only as a bit of extra labor, making the after-rest the sweeter.

But I, too, sometimes have my innings. I tell Thérèse that though I, with her, have completely forgotten most of what we said, I remember perfectly that it was she who rushed into my arms, and that it was she who first gave me the familiar *du*—I know I shouldn’t have dared.

"Monsieur, you deserve—I don’t know what, for saying so."

"Nevertheless I am convinced that those words I still hear in my dreams were actually uttered. I couldn’t have *imagined* them, and it is hardly likely that another damsel in the neighborhood would have been laboring under the same monomania at the same moment, and given utterance to it in the same thrilling tones."

"I dare say I asked you to remember that we were in the open street, and that people would stare at us,"

"Perhaps you did. I remember finding myself with you under a discreet porch, and you were kissing—"

"I'll never, never kiss you again, if you say so."

"Won't you? I rather think you will. You once vowed never to speak to me again; but, dear me! you were in a tremendous hurry to break your vow."

"You'll be telling me next that I asked you to marry me."

"I think you did, or something uncommonly like it. For what's an honorable fellow to do when a girl rushes into his arms and hangs about his neck and says—"

"Finish, finish now! Fill up the measure of your iniquity."

"—'*Ich habe dich so lieb, so lieb,*' for I'll take my oath I heard those words that day, and they transported me into—"

"Into a hiding-place under a neighboring porch. I should hope they did. Oh, is there no law in this hard, gray, gloomy, cruel, heartless England to protect wives against unheard-of insults from their husbands?"

"My dear, the inimitable laws of this country were made to protect the strong against the weak—made, in a word, by husbands for husbands."

Somehow we never get much beyond this point. Somehow Thérèse forgets to scold, and I forget to banter. We cling together as we clung under the friendly protecting porch, and the words "*Ich habe dich so lieb, so lieb,*" are heard again in chorus, in a man's deep bass and a woman's thrilling contralto. Who began it we don't know and we don't care. Perhaps an angel struck the chord, which once divinely touched can never cease vibrating.

But I am anticipating, and must now explain how it was that my Thérèse had sought refuge in a convent.

Honest William was dead. Very soon after my departure another "mad Englishman" had come to Gütsch. Like my former self, he, too, had discovered the vanity of everything else on earth, and now sought a new interest, by risking his life to view winter effects from the summits of ice-bound mountains.

And this new *Engländer* proved his indomitable British pluck by precipitating himself (accidentally, it was believed) into a crevice a thousand feet below the glacier of Uri Rothstock.

He was rescued from his icy coffin by a few brave Swiss and

one noble fellow-countryman, who thought nothing of pluck, but all the world of duty, whether it led to life or to death.

"His little bit of a sore throat, Herre," said Peter's Nick—who told me the sad story—"caught from the exposure, seemed nothing at first, and we wondered at the dreadful look which came into his daughter's eyes. But it was burning fever in the morning. I was with him when he died, two days afterwards, and Mademoiselle Thérèse was there too, and the doctor."

"Did he express any wish concerning her, Nick? Did he speak of me?"

"Listen, Herre, I am going to tell you. She had not slept since he was taken ill, nor eaten, I verily believe, one morsel. She stood beside him, looking more like death than he did, until he opened his eyes, and they were bright, and he seemed to know us.

"*'Herr Doctor,'* said Thérèse, speaking in a quick, low voice which almost broke my heart, because there was *hope* in it, 'he sees me; he knows me; he will live.'

"But the doctor only sighed and shook his head.

"Then our master spoke:

"*'Art thou here, little daughter? Dear heart, God is also here and will bless thee.'*

"And then, Herre, he closed his eyes again, and we hardly knew the minute when he died. And, though no priest oiled him, I know he went to heaven."

I saw the two graves afterwards; his and that of the Englishman, whose pluck (the Swiss call it spleen) caused a good man's death.

The one is marked by a stately marble monument; the other is only a modest mound, under which a woman's remains, once dearly loved, also lie. At its head is a simple cross of gray stone, whereon is engraved a plain English name and the words, "By their fruits ye shall know them." Bright blue *Männertreu* smiles up at the gazer from the mound in the spring; and all through the long summer days and short-lived summer nights a white rose, growing luxuriantly, fills the neighboring air with perfume.

But I never saw any ecstatic Englishmen standing here, as I have seen them by the other.

Once I saw two Swiss girls beside it, and heard a morsel of their dialogue;

"The hotel at Axenstein is full of English milords and miladies, Clärchen."

"*Ach*, I don't like the English."

"Hush, *Mädel*! It is an Englishman who sleeps below us, and he was brave and good, and all the village mourned him when he died."

CHAPTER XLVIII.

"WHITHER THOU GOEST, I WILL GO."

"One loving howre

For many years of sorrow can dispence:

A dram of sweete is worth a pound of sowre."

SPENSER (*Faëry Queene*).

WHAT is harder, after winning a woman's heart, than to induce her to fix the day which is to make you the happiest mortal in existence. She puts it off, and haggles and hesitates about it to such a degree that a bystander from another world (where, it is to be hoped, women are not so coy and not so fond of driving you to distraction) would be fully justified in believing that the day she is besought to name can be none other than the day of her execution.

Thérèse was no exception to this rule, and, oh, desperation! I had only one clipped fortnight wherein to find this day and take her back to England.

"Wouldn't Monday?" I modestly suggest.

What was monsieur thinking of? Would any sensible girl be married on a Monday, the most unfortunate day of the week.

"Well then, let us say Tuesday."

H'm! Tuesday was not an unsuitable day—taken *as a day*; but, taken in connection with her few little preparations—

"Preparations be hanged!" What on earth had she to do but to put on a bonnet and shawl, and walk with me to the altar? The rings were provided, were they not? one on her biggest finger, ready to be transferred to my smallest; the other, *vice versa*.

"Monsieur, did you forge the rings, or did you bring them with you?"

"Never mind the rings! The question is the day, Thérèse. Keep to the point, mademoiselle."

"You would hardly like to marry me in this black dress, monsieur?"

"Oh, if it's the dress, borrow one of Fleurette."

"Or perhaps monsieur has a spare suit and would lend it me for the occasion. It would fit me, I think, shortened, better than any garment of Fleurette's."

"Are you pouting, Thérèse?"

"No, monsieur, I never pout, nor do I pretend to a fine figure, but to compare me with Fleurette—"

"Is blasphemy. I know it. She is as lean as a scarecrow, while you—"

"If you are going to ridicule my countrywoman, monsieur, and one, too, who was my foster-mother, I think you had better go."

Imagine how this cruelty cuts me to the heart, for we are under the roof of Madame Papillote, to whose protection, *faute de mieux*, I have consigned my treasure, and who acts the part of courtship dragon, *à la mode Suisse*, to perfection. This present interview has been heavily purchased with one of my now scanty five-franc pieces.

"If you wish me to go," I say, rising, and in a tone of voice which might have softened the dragon herself, whose baleful eye is probably even now upon us.

"Not just yet, monsieur; we must settle this matter first, and, indeed, it is time that it was settled."

My misery is drowned in joy. She, too, is impatient.

"For I have been thinking, monsieur," she continues, earnestly, "that perhaps we are making a grand mistake, and that, though I love you so dearly, I am not fit to be your wife."

If twenty baleful eyes had been at the keyhole, I should have done just the same. There are some impulses we *cannot* resist. I have her in my arms now, and am holding her to my beating heart in a clasp which says plainer than words, "I will not let thee go."

"But, monsieur"—her voice is softer now—"it is quite true, nevertheless. I am a poor, ignorant village girl, and you are a great gentleman. I do not know how great people behave. I should make you blush for me, and when I saw you blushing I should die."

"When I am ashamed of you, Thérèse, take a dagger and thrust it through my dastard heart."

"It is easy for monsieur to say that, but I should not like to murder—even my husband. I should not like to be *hingerichtet*—what is it they do to poor, miserable sinners in your England, which calls itself so great and good, and yet is so cruel, even to its women—hanged, monsieur? Oh, I should not like to be hanged."

"They should hang me first, Thérèse."

We are talking nonsense, for now our hot cheeks are touching, and the tears which flow from my eyes mingle themselves with hers, and there is no sense in the world half so sensible as this sublime lack of it—this blissful maze of rapturous idiocy, wherein we only know that we *are*, and are together.

I haven't the slightest recollection of what we said during the next half-hour. Perhaps Madame Papillote could supply the curious reader with the information. She still resides, I believe, in the Schauteufelskreuz Strasse, 27A, Lucerne; and still entraps unfortunate bachelors in the subtle net wherein she entangled Moppert. The cat is living too, and, though daily threatened with the fate Thérèschen fears, still holds that tragic termination to its career in abeyance.

Before I left, Thérèse *did* name the day. I think what finally induced her to do so was the information of how poor I was. I had quite forgotten to tell her until then. I had intended doing it, over and over again, but somehow in her presence it seemed such an unimportant matter, so ridiculous even, that after the first look into her dear eyes I had lost all thought of it. But now her evident fear of my riches gave me the desired opportunity.

She was sitting on a wooden footstool at my feet—she always would sit at my feet, instead of making me sit at hers, which *then* would not have hurt my vanity, as it does now—and her elbows were on my knees, her sweet, upturned face supported by her hands, her dark, mysterious eyes full of a grave, solemn wonder and amaze at her own joy, and radiant thanks to God who gave it.

It was then I told her that I was poor.

I declare, I fervently declare, that for all the treasures of Golconda I would not have missed that sight. For now no worm-

ing doubt can ever gnaw away the absolute certainty of being loved for my own sake, and not for the sake of my possessions.

Yet it was in a sort of agony that I watched the color rising into her pale cheek and then fading again, and my own lips began to tremble at sight of the quivering of hers, until I saw and understood that strange, new light in her wonderful eyes, half ecstatic joy, half timid apprehension.

"Is it true, monsieur, is it quite, quite true?"

"It is as true as the Gospel, my sweet bride, and if you do not mind—"

"Mind—oh, my husband! God forgive me if I ever forget!"

And the next moment two soft arms are round my neck, and dark hair falls about me, and lips, pure as an angel's, unsolicited seek mine, and—

Let me stop. There is in the heart of every one of us a Holy of Holies, into which no other may ever gain admittance.

Yet let no one crudely imagine that from this time we subsided into two turtle-doves. Perpetual billing and cooing would have suited neither one of us. We were human beings intended by a wise Creator to work and live as well as love—ay, and for a change, to quarrel too; just enough to season life without spoiling it. Thérèse scolds me frequently, while I in my turn, and in a raised tone of voice, occasionally talk of adopting vigorous measures; reminding my rebellious helpmate with some austerity of a grand virtue which the Church requires only of the wife.

At which I usually get only a toss of a naughty head, and a flash from two bright eyes full of insubordination, and the remark that if I want a slave I must look elsewhere.

"Aileen is no slave, yet I never hear—"

"Do you think they tell *you* of all their squabbles, wiseacre? Besides, Aileen is a darling little Englishwoman brought up to obedience."

"While you—"

"While I, monsieur, am a Swiss *Wildfang*, a free citizeness of a free republic."

"The law, madam, acknowledges no such differences—our English law, to which you are now subject, remember, merges you into me. In fact, legally, you have now no existence."

"I don't care a red *Heller* for your English laws, made for a bilious people. And you needn't look at me like that. You knew very well before you married me that I had 'a temper requiring the severest discipline.'"

I wince a little as she thus slaps me in the face with my own words, but reply, with dignity: "Exactly, and was it not a Christian act to undertake the disciplining of it?"

At this point the process—a most terrific one—usually commences. I take Thérèse upon my knee and chastise her there with extreme severity. Yet, strange to say, the only apparent result is the consciousness of having done my duty, and the discovery that duty occasionally is its own reward.

Oh, me! how my tongue wags when I begin to talk about my wife! Upon my soul, I believe I'm hen-pecked. Never mind! you and I, dear brethren in the same condition, know how infamously it is blackened, and wouldn't exchange our servitude for the freedom of every country in the world.

We were married on the Tuesday, and I have no more notion than the man in the moon (our moon) what she wore, except that I supplied no pantaloons, nor Fleurette any garment for the purpose. But I know that she looked more lovely than any woman ever did before or ever will again.

The ceremony was performed in a quiet Roman Catholic church, and the gentle priest who tied the knot seemed serenely indifferent to the fact that he was delivering over a daughter of the true faith into the hands of a heretic. Lucerne at that time knew next to nothing of religious strife or creed hatred, and I dare say a part of the extra fee I paid the simple-minded Romish *Kaplan* was spent in entertaining his neighbor, the Lutheran pastor, to an extra pot in the neutral Schenke where they hob-a-nobbed together.

But oh! what *do* you think my wife had the audacity to do before we left the sanctuary, dim and odorous from the steam of the swinging censers, and without even a "by your leave" either, which, by the by, I certainly shouldn't have accorded. There *are* limits, and magnanimity may degenerate into weakness.

Why, she went straight from the altar, leaving me a widowed and disconsolate bridegroom upon its very steps, threw her arms round the bronzed neck of Peter's Nick (who with Fleur-

ette, Madame Papillote, Josef Aufdermauer, and the six lads still remaining to him, had been present as intensely interested witnesses), and kissed him on the lips before us all, as reverently, as earnestly, as beseechingly, as if she had known to its full extent (perhaps she did, women have a marvellous intuition) what a hero he was. And when the big fellow sobbed out aloud in his mingled pain and pleasure, she sobbed too, and clung to him instead of me for a moment, and would not be comforted.

I have meant to remonstrate with her for that act ever since, but haven't done it yet. I think I will to-morrow.

On passing out I stopped to speak to Josef Aufdermauer, and to put a trifle (badly as I could afford it) into the bereaved father's hand for little Josef's sake. The boy's mother had gone home to God.

We, too, are going home together, she and I, standing side by side upon the deck of the gallant steamer which, with panting funnel and wide-spread sails, her prow towards England, is straining every timber and creaking in every joint, in the eagerness of her endeavors to get back as speedily as possible to the dear old country which, with all its multitudinous faults, is still, still, bless her! the best, the very best, in the whole wide world. It is a stormy night, and sea-gulls fly screaming over us; and the wind whistles in the sails and in our deafened ears; and the wild waves mount on one another to get a peep at Thérèse, sending salt sea foam to kiss her glowing cheek.

We are alone: for the man at the helm, one quiet hand upon the wheel, is intent upon his duty; his grave eyes fixed upon the waste of waters, his heart, maybe, like mine, turned yearningly towards that England we are too proud to praise because she is our own.

We have been chatting merrily, mouth to ear, for the eager wind swallows up our words as soon as they are uttered; and sometimes (sweeter language still) mouth to mouth: laying a thousand plans for making the most of our small means; determining to be as happy as the gods on Olympus, even though our daily portion be literally limited to daily bread.

Then I notice that it is my voice alone mingling itself with the roar of the elements, and that Thérèse is not looking, as I am, forward towards our island home, but back again—gazing with

intense earnestness at the narrow strip of land, rapidly lessening, behind which lies the continent of Europe.

And is it only the heaving and tossing of our ship upon the restless waters which makes her tremble so violently? I feel her heart beating high against mine, and her tender bosom heaves under the storm-wind of an intense emotion, and the salt drops coursing down her cheeks are not brine from the ocean—they fall hot upon my caressing hand.

The moon is at its full; bright and clear and stainless she rides, attended by an innumerable retinue; and the waves multiply her beauty in a thousand silvery reflections. I put back the hood shrouding the sweet face of my wife, the changes upon which make for me a soul's barometer, and see to my terror and amaze that she is strongly agitated—her whole figure convulsed with the violence of her grief.

“My darling, what, *what* is the matter?”

I have never seen her cry like that before. I try to clasp her to my heart, but am repulsed. Her streaming eyes—her outstretched, yearning hands are turned from me—turned in a passion of regret towards the *Heimath* she has left.

“Oh, my father,” she sobs, “my beloved country! How can I live without you?”

I dare not even try to console her. I shrink back and cover my face with my hand, all my joy turned into mourning.

The ship bounds forward joyfully. Every second decreases the narrow strip of land behind her. And my wife sobs on at my side, her dress touching me, yet still an ocean between us—a great gulf which I cannot cross to get to her.

The ship, true as steel to her rudder, pauses not a moment. The waves, rising ever higher, seem to sweep over the narrow strip of land, and now it is swallowed up by the great deep. Nothing is to be seen but the fathomless ocean, and the fathomless sky above in which the moon and stars ride untroubled. Before us is nothing but England—to me, chief among the lands upon earth; to her, a strange country. My wife has ceased to sob, but the gulf still yawns between us, and all my joy is turned into heaviness. I cannot even mourn, I am so desolate. Pain is at its climax; it has ceased to hurt, it only stupefies me.

Then—I cannot say after how long a time—Thérèse turns and looks at me.

I don't know whether the man at the helm thinks we are both moon-struck. He is stationed there to guide us back to England, and his eye is on the waste of waters, and his hand upon the wheel still, when I become conscious of him again. For the gulf, impassable to me, which yawned between us, has been bridged over in a single second by some magic power God gave alone to the woman. Thérèse is in my arms—she came there; I did not, could not, call her—and she is clinging, oh! so close to me, full of penitence, and saying:

“‘Whither thou goest, I will go: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.

“‘The Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me.’”

CHAPTER XLIX.

27 SPINSTER LANE, CLAPHAM.

“I know that this was Life—the track
Whereon with equal feet we fared:
And then, as now, the day prepared
The daily burden for the back.

“But this it was that made me move
As light as carrier-bird in air,
I loved the weight I had to bear,
Because it needed help of Love.”

TENNYSON (*In Memoriam*).

THERE is something else to tell; something I never knew until we had been settled down some little time in our narrow London home, and after I had begun to discover what it really means to be poor.

For oh! there were so many, many things wanting in our humble home—things I had hitherto believed absolute necessities, but which Thérèse declared (after having translated my hundred pounds per annum into the more familiar francs, and accommodated herself to London prices in the most extraordinary manner) to be incompatible with my income.

“My dear, we must have at least *one* experienced maid. How is it possible for you to manage without?”

“My dear”—mimicking me, the puss, in her broken English

—"if we keep an experienced maid we shall have to pay her—Aileen says so—quite two hundred and fifty francs a year."

"Well?"

"Vell, *wo soll das Geld herkommen*—vare sall de moneys come from?"

"I'm not going to let you work like a slave, and spoil your pretty hands, whatever else we do without."

"But monsieur does not like to do without *anything*. Only the other day monsieur discovered that he could not live without a *fauteuil*, and the *fauteuil* cost—oh, such a heap of moneys!"

"Well, it answers the purpose of two other chairs; it holds us both."

"*Leider!* I cannot sew one bit now in the evenings, since monsieur bought that *fauteuil*."

"Thérèse, I have something to say to you."

"Vell, monsieur."

"Not vell, say *well*—ou—ell."

"Ou—ou—ell! *Ach, welch barbarische Sprache!* Ou—ou—ell; now, what is it monsieur has to say, with that ugly frown?"

"I have two baptismal names, Thérèse, Charles and Reginald. Choose between them. But from henceforth 'monsieur' is interdicted."

"*Interdit—verboten*. And monsieur says it with such a frown, and his lips are close—oh, so close and straight! I am wanted in the kitchen. I will go."

"No, you won't, till you've done what you are bidden."

"You are hurting my hand, monsieur, and how can I speak when you close my lips like that, with your ugly *Schnurrbart?*"

"Charles or Reginald. Make haste!"

"Sharrel—Karl. If I had known that you were such a tyrant—*solch Tyran*—I would never—"

"Never have married me—eh? But you did, you see, and can't undo it. And now, apologize instantly for maligning my beautiful moustache."

"Beautiful indeed! I know you think so, or you wouldn't spend so much time about it every morning. But it's a poor apology for a moustache after all, when you come to compare it with that of a German Uhlan officer—with the *Hauptmann* von Uslar's, for instance—"

"Thérèse, your nose *does* turn up."

"It is turning up at your moustache, monsieur."

"Charles, *Charles*, CHARLES!"

"Not quite so loud; the neighbors might hear you."

"Charles, I say Charles."

"Is there any one in the street of that name, monsieur, whose attention you wish to attract?"

"Oh, I'll tame you," I mutter, *sotto voce*. Then aloud:

"And pray don't show yourself in public with Aileen; your sallow skin does contrast so unfavorably with her clear complexion and matchless English bloom."

"My complexion seemed to satisfy you in Switzerland, monsieur."

"Well, you see, you had it all your own way there."

Thérèse looks up at me with that peculiar haze in her eyes which makes them unlike any other eyes in the world, when we hear some one coming along the narrow street whistling, "The girl I left behind me." We know the postman's step, we know his whistle, and lo! he is actually knocking at our door.

"A letter, monsieur," cries Thérèse, the haze in her eyes swallowed up by the glad light of expectation.

We both look eagerly towards the door. Letters are rare things nowadays.

In the meantime, Belinda, our maid of all work, shuffles, in slippers always hopelessly down at heel, towards the unwonted messenger.

Just a word about Belinda.

She has just reached that enchanting period of girl-life denominated as "sweet seventeen," an age poets rave about, but which we ordinary mortals usually find accompanied by arms more or less too lean; hair more or less rebellious against the comb; feet bursting out of shoes too small for them; a heart doting on ribbons and terribly susceptible to slights—in short, sweet to satiety.

Such, only rather more so, was Belinda.

I invariably fall over something on returning home from my duties as foreign correspondent, for our lobby is dark, and there is sure to be a trap laid there for my unwary feet. Sometimes it is a scrubbing-brush, sometimes a piece of soap, sometimes an over-full pail, sometimes Belinda herself. Then, if I venture the remark that this perpetual worship of god Neptune, though a

very good thing, may perhaps be carried to excess, the aggrieved god gushes at me from Belinda's eyes.

She has another rather aggravating peculiarity. However late I return, or however severely my knees are broken over these various man-traps, she always receives me with the amazed exclamation, "You here a'ready, sir!" which seems to convey the covert insinuation that my presence is undesired, nay, even an intrusion, and that they would be much more comfortable without me.

(There is one thing puzzles me—*en parenthèse*—why is it that though Belinda adores water, wallows in it, so to say, from dewy morn to dewier eve, it never seems to make her anything but dirty? Perhaps some excellent housewife may be able to solve this mystery.)

But what matters it, what matters anything, when the door is shut upon Belinda and the whole outside world, and we are alone together in the little parlor which *she* has transformed for me into as glorious a Paradise as that wherein Adam courted Eve.

The room is as dimly lighted as a sanctuary, for we burn but one jet of gas to save expense; but the fire blazes up brightly; and the curtains are closely drawn; and the hum outside is sweeter than silence; and the purr of the white cat upon the hearth makes a gentle refrain to the melody we are both chanting; and the viands before us are transformed into nectar and ambrosia, food for gods, such as we are; and Thérèse comes ever nearer to my heart.

My wife, my wife! We have had to bear since then the burden of riches, and with patience and perseverance we have accommodated our backs to the load, but we have enjoyed too the blessings of poverty, the taste of hardly earned bread, and we know which burden is the heavier—*we know*. We know, and thank God for the knowledge, what may be the inexpressible delights of a poor man's home.

Upon my soul, I am forgetting to tell you about that letter! We hear the postman resume his praises to "The girl he left behind him;" we hear Belinda, after a long interval, slowly and emotionally close the door; and we get the letter at last—soapy, suddy, and exceedingly wet, but otherwise uninjured.

And let no impulsive reader imagine, with that far-sighted-

ness which belongs to impulse, that the letter is from Ballyacora Hall, announcing the penitence of an old man who yearns to open his heart and home to a forgiven son. Nothing of the kind: my father lived many years after the receipt of this letter, in full possession of his property, his gout, his implacability, his determination never to acknowledge, under any circumstances whatsoever, either me or my wife.

No, the letter is a foreign one and has been originally posted in Lucerne.

I say originally, because it has been posted anew several times after that. It had been addressed in the first place to Ballyacora, sent from thence I know not whither, and now bears in blue pencil these words: "Try 27 Spinster Lane, Clapham."

Now 27 Spinster Lane, Clapham, is the hardly palatial residence, three doors from Aileen's, where Thérèse and I have taken up our abode. Rent, nineteen pounds, nineteen shillings per annum; one parlor, front; one kitchen, back; one scullery, back-est; two bedrooms, and an attic—the last apartment, Belinda's cubiculum, place of refuge and retreat. How many altars she has erected to god Neptune up there, I don't know. I always think of "up there," with a sensation of awe, and wonder to what degree of responsibility manslaughter extends. The thought sometimes strikes me: Suppose Belinda should perish in the ascent or descent of that ladder, what verdict would the coroner bring in?

But in spite of its drawbacks I was never quite so deliriously happy anywhere else, and the little house is still sacred ground to me.

All this time, Thérèse kneels beside my chair, her dimpled elbows on my knees, her soft eyes bright with the eager light of expectation.

"To whom is it addressed, monsieur?"

"To me, Thérèse."

And I read aloud the somewhat alarming superscription:

*"Ihro hochwohlgeborenen,
dem gnädigen Herrn Milord Smythe, Esk,
Ireland,
zu Ballyacora Hall, County of Cork."*

"What does it mean?" "Was soll es bedeuten?"

We question simultaneously, each in the language most familiar to us, but there is no intelligible response.

I cut round the seal, which is so large, and red, and shining, and perfect, that it would be next door to sacrilege to break it, and read the following:

“Zur Berichtigung der Erbschaftsangelegenheiten der gnädigen Frau, Milady Smythe, Esk., geborene Fräulein Marie Thérèse Eveline Pascoe, Tochter des weiland William Pascoe, Schenk wirth zu Gütsch, Brunnen, Canton Schwyz, Republik Schweiz, also:”

Upon getting to the end of which astonishing sentence, I cease to read aloud, rapidly scan and absorb the remainder for my own edification, and then look down, with eyes as dilated as hers, into the bright, upturned, expectant face of my wife.

“What is it, monsieur? Nothing bad, surely?”

“Allow me to assist you to a chair, madam. The impropriety of your kneeling at my feet is too enormous to be allowed to continue. Do you know who you are?”

“Am I not Thérèse, your wife?”

“I trust so. I hope we may not receive another legal document, pointing out that the marriage contract we mutually entered into was not in accordance with the mysterious laws of that incomprehensible Swiss Republic. But you are something more than my wife.”

“What am I then, monsieur?” a little frightened.

“A *gnädige Frau*, Thérèse.”

“Oh, is *that* all?”

“An English My Lady.”

“O *weh!*”

“A great heiress!”

The landlord of the little schenke at Gütsch had been a prosperous as well as a good man; and though the thousands of francs, put into pounds, did not look quite so many as they looked at first, there was enough to remove us forever beyond poverty. And there is a love which rises above the consideration of owing the means of comfortable existence to a wife!

We moved into a larger house, got an experienced maid, and sent away Belinda to her mother at home. And the years creeping on extended our narrow circle more and more. First we became uncle and aunt, then father and mother. It was in this

second home that our Charley was born—in this second home that the quick, tumultuous current of youthful love widened into the broader, more tranquil, but ever deeper love of maturity. And oh, how happy—how happy we were!

CHAPTER L.

THE VOICE OF SOCIETY.

“Sure, love *vincit omnia*; is immeasurably above all ambition, more precious than wealth, more noble than name.”—THACKERAY (*Esmond*).

My story is nearly finished. Only a few more words, and I have done.

I must tell you a little about my first interview with Aileen after I had introduced her to my wife, on which occasion she took me as severely to task as if I had only been her husband.

“You iniquitous boy,” she began, “how dared you go and say it?”

“Go and say what, Aileen?”

“No pretending, sir, you know very well.”

“Indeed, I don’t.”

“Why, that she was poky and lean and wore spectacles and was a regular blue.”

“Oh, I said nothing of the sort.”

“Do you mean to deny it, sir?”

“Absolutely. On my oath, if you wish.”

“Oh, *oh*, OH!”

“You, *you*, YOU!”

“Please to remember, sir, that I am married.”

“Please to remember, madam, that I am also.”

“And that I have a husband to stick up for me.”

“And that I have a wife.”

“One a great, *great*, GREAT deal too good for you.”

“Ah, Aileen, I won’t quarrel with that crescendo.”

“And a great, *great*, GREAT deal too pretty.”

“Nor with that, though I flatter myself that I am rather a decent-looking fellow nevertheless.”

Aileen glances at my face in the mirror, and the look of satisfaction in her bright eyes gives the lie direct to her severe

words. Then she relents entirely and gets on tip-toe to pull my ears and bury her cold little nose in my moustache.

"But Charley, dear, you shouldn't have told me such stories about your wife. If you could only see the creature I conjured up."

"Really and truly, Aileen, I never said anything about her that was not true. It was all you."

"All me, when I had never seen her? What *will* you say next?"

"You are such a rare hand at guessing, you know—find out everything."

It is always worth while to tease Aileen, if only to bring up those beautiful blushes of hers. The cheeks begin it, then the little pearly ears catch the infection, until she is all aglow to the finger-tips.

She was all aglow still, when the others, entering, put an end to the dialogue.

Aileen is no exception to her sex. She persists to this hour that it was I who first gave utterance to those infamous libels on my wife.

And Malcolmson pretends to believe her. If I didn't see a mischievous twinkle in his eye sometimes, I should think he had lost his senses.

My father died ten years after my marriage. My mother had gone before him.

We were never reconciled. I never saw my father after that evening when he drove me from Ballyacora Hall.

I took my eldest boy, a bright, warm-hearted lad of nine years, to attend the funeral with me. Together we knelt by the ponderous bed whereon the remains of his dead grandfather lay. There was a frown upon the dead face, at sight of which my boy looked up at me with tears in his eyes, begging me to take him home again and have no share in the cruel riches which made dead men look like that.

Then it was that I fully recognized what God had done for me, and from what I had been saved.

The late master of Ballyacora Hall had left several wills behind him. All—from the first one, dated a few hours after my expulsion, to the last—all disinheriting me.

It was evident that the sting of my refusal to accede to the intensest wish of his life had rankled in the old man's breast all the long years as deeply as when it was inflicted.

It was evident, too, that he had been keenly alive to the possibility of a lawsuit, and as keenly determined that it should be unavailing. The wills had been drawn up with scrupulous legality—and only needed his signature—which could be added any moment.

But any moment is sometimes no moment.

"Bless us," said the lawyer, "not one of 'em worth the paper it is written on!" And now he looked at me with the respect due to a millionaire. "He'd have 'em drawn up at all hours of the day and night, but always fought shy of signing 'em. He'd do that when we were gone, he'd say, and let the servants witness 'em. And to think he's gone and died and left 'em unsigned!"

It was too much for the lawyer. He got up and wiped his damp forehead and loosened his cravat.

"I congratulate you, sir," he continued. "I've always said to my father that 'twas a burning shame, I have—good heavens, to think he went and died and never signed 'em!"

For all his congratulations, I am bound to say he looked bitterly disappointed.

"Well, sir," he said again, with a gulp, "I con-grat-u-late you, *I do*." Here he blew his nose, and extended a long-fingered, lank, and bony hand, muttering, nevertheless, under his breath, "And never signed one of 'em, after all!"

"And to think," he continued, "that that fine boy of yours should inherit in spite of him. Handsome boy, very! Favors you in complexion, sir, but evidently features the mother. Must be a most extry-ordinary handsome lady. Well, who'd have thought it!"

He rubbed his closely shaven chin, and congratulated me again.

"Is this worth anything?" I asked, suddenly, handing him a crumpled bit of paper I had found in a watch-pocket over my father's bedhead, and which I had been reading.

He took it from me, glanced at it, read it through, took off his spectacles to rub them, and read it again.

"Is it worth anything?" I asked, a little triumphantly, I own.

"Worth anything! My good sir" (how changed his manner was!) "this must not be suppressed."

"Certainly not."

"He's drawn it up himself, but I can't find any flaw in it, and—it is signed and witnessed. *Signed and witnessed.*"

"Yes, I saw that."

"My good sir" (with dignity and some severity), "I cannot allow it to be suppressed."

"Who wants to suppress it?" I asked, laughing.

"Do you know what it means?" His astonishment at my mad levity forced him into straightforwardness.

"Yes, I know, and know, too, the weight of the load it takes off my back." And I added, inwardly, "As for her, bless her! *she* will know what to do, for all her life she has had but one Counsellor—an unerring one."

The lawyer lifted his spectacles to look at me again with wondering and uncovered eyes; then stroked his bristly chin.

"We might try to prove that he was in his dotage when he drew it up."

"He was never more in his right mind," I said, fervently.

"You know that the woman is dead?" retorted the baffled lawyer, with sharpness.

"I know that she is living. I wrote to her immediately after finding this."

The lawyer gave it up, evidently. He put his spectacles slowly into their case, and rose to go.

For this will, only dated a few weeks back, was afterwards found to be perfectly correct in every particular. It left all the property, unconditionally, to my aunt—"the only living being who had never disappointed him—the only living being who was really good."

"And it was from her dear hands, bless her! bless her! that I received this estate of Ballyacora—the gold seeming to lose its tarnish by passing through them. It was by her dear hands that my sisters and my cousin Käthe had justice done them.

And when I add that even my noble brother-in-law, the viscount—who turned up, attended by his valet, tolerably sober, to get all he could from everybody—was pleased to call her "a brick—hic—of an old girl, and as lovely an old lady" (mark well, *lady*) "as the—hic—sun ever shone on," I am sure every one will understand that she knew how to give with discretion as well as generosity.

We have lived ever since at Ballyacora Hall,

And the load, at first so heavy, has grown wonderfully light; we have learned not to look back too wistfully to the less encumbered days which went before.

As for my Thérèse, she makes me marvel at the graceful dignity with which she has adapted herself to her new position. Aristocratic noses have ceased to turn up at the *parvenue*. Aristocratic ears listen delighted to the sweet, decisive words with which she sets Society's laws, when she chooses, at defiance. The Schenkworth's Töchterlein might become a leader of fashion if she chose; but, thank Heaven! she doesn't choose.

In a word, my wife, though I say it myself, astonishes me every day by the magnificent way in which she keeps a clear head and steady foot amid rocks and precipices innumerable, and grows more love—

No, I won't say it myself. I'll let my noble brother-in-law take the words out of my ignoble mouth. Listen, then, to the voice of Society, hiccupping out of the aristocratic lips of his lordship, Viscount Kilreeny.

"By Jove, Smythe, old fl'ah, I wish I had the doosed luck to stand in your—er—shoes. I never saw such a tidy bit of—er—mean, lovely woman. Lovely woman, stooping to folly, you know. Used to be a—er—crack hand at the poets. And she's got some life in her and—er—warmth. Statues nice to look at—have got no end of 'em at Kilreeny Castle. My father was a thorough—er—what d'ye call it, in that line; works of art, you know—but when you are married to a—er—block of marble, 'tis (in confidence) shivery, doosedly shivery. 'Pon honor, if I'd had the chance, I'd have spoiled your little game, and made your wife into a—hic—viscountess."

I rather think, though, that Thérèse would have declined the honor of being made into a hic—viscountess.

Aileen and her husband are as happy as ever, though the top of the ladder is not yet reached. But Gerald Malcolmson is making a name in his profession, and the tiny house at Clapham is now tenanted by two tinier spinster ladies who harmonize better with the feminine character of the neighborhood.

Mabel is married to a very learned professor, who says he has the cleverest wife in the three kingdoms. The world adds that she writes half of his books, and crams him for the other half; but the world occasionally talks scandal.

The beautiful Countess of Mandelsloh—our cousin Käthe—still lives with my aunt. More than one admiring suitor has tried to gain the treasure, but she will listen to none. Her whole life is devoted to the reparation of her father's wrong, and the mutual love between her and our aunt is wonderful to see. They are all in all to each other.

Besides, though she has never told me so, I know that, even in his grave, she still loves Prince Eberhard.

My aunt is very old now, and very feeble, and I fancy the younger lady fades with her. I fancy they will go to heaven together.

There is a great problem agitating men's minds just now: "Is life worth the living?"

Yes. I dare say so, because I know it is true. Yes, with love.

Good-bye! God bless you!

THE END.

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
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
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
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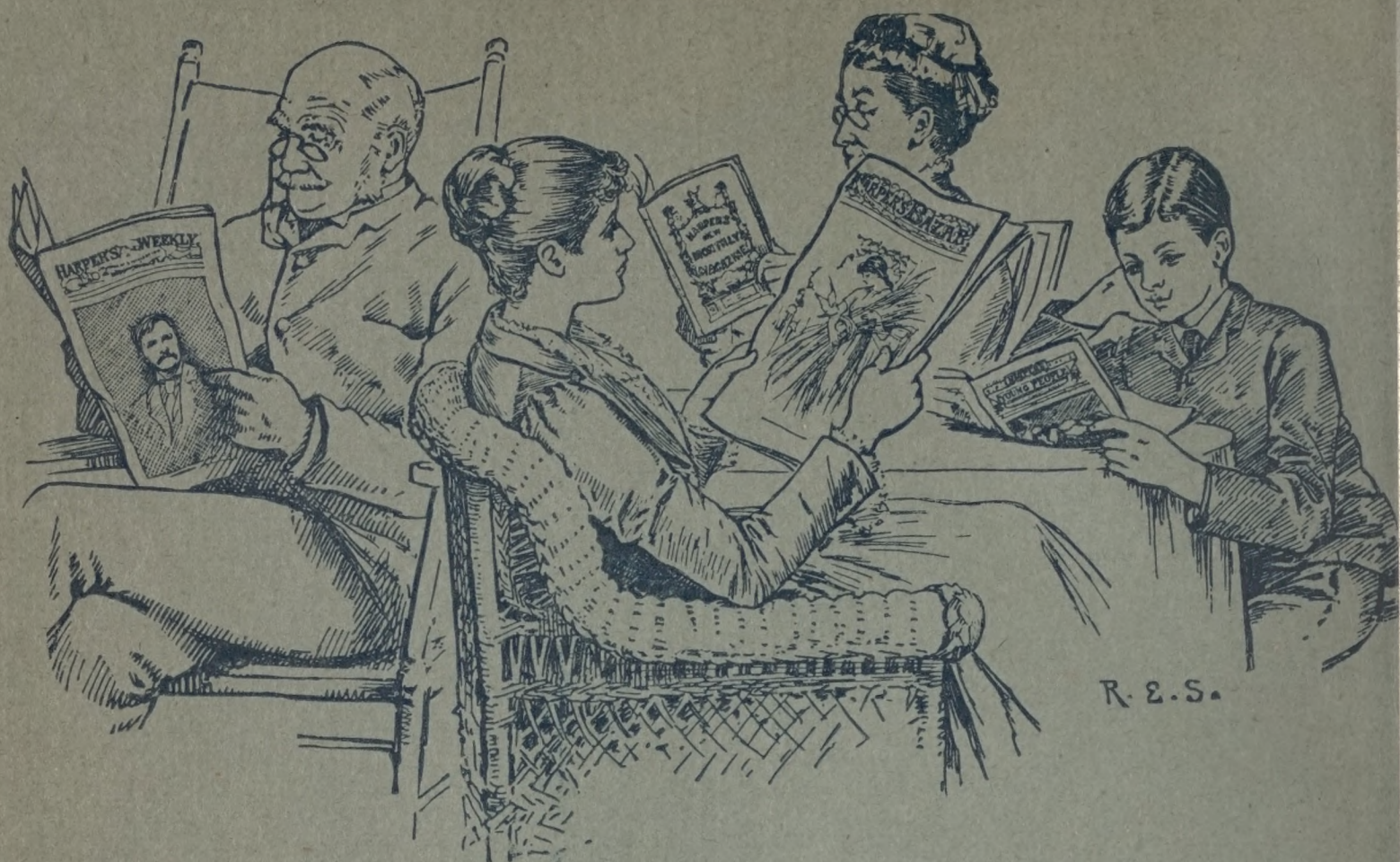
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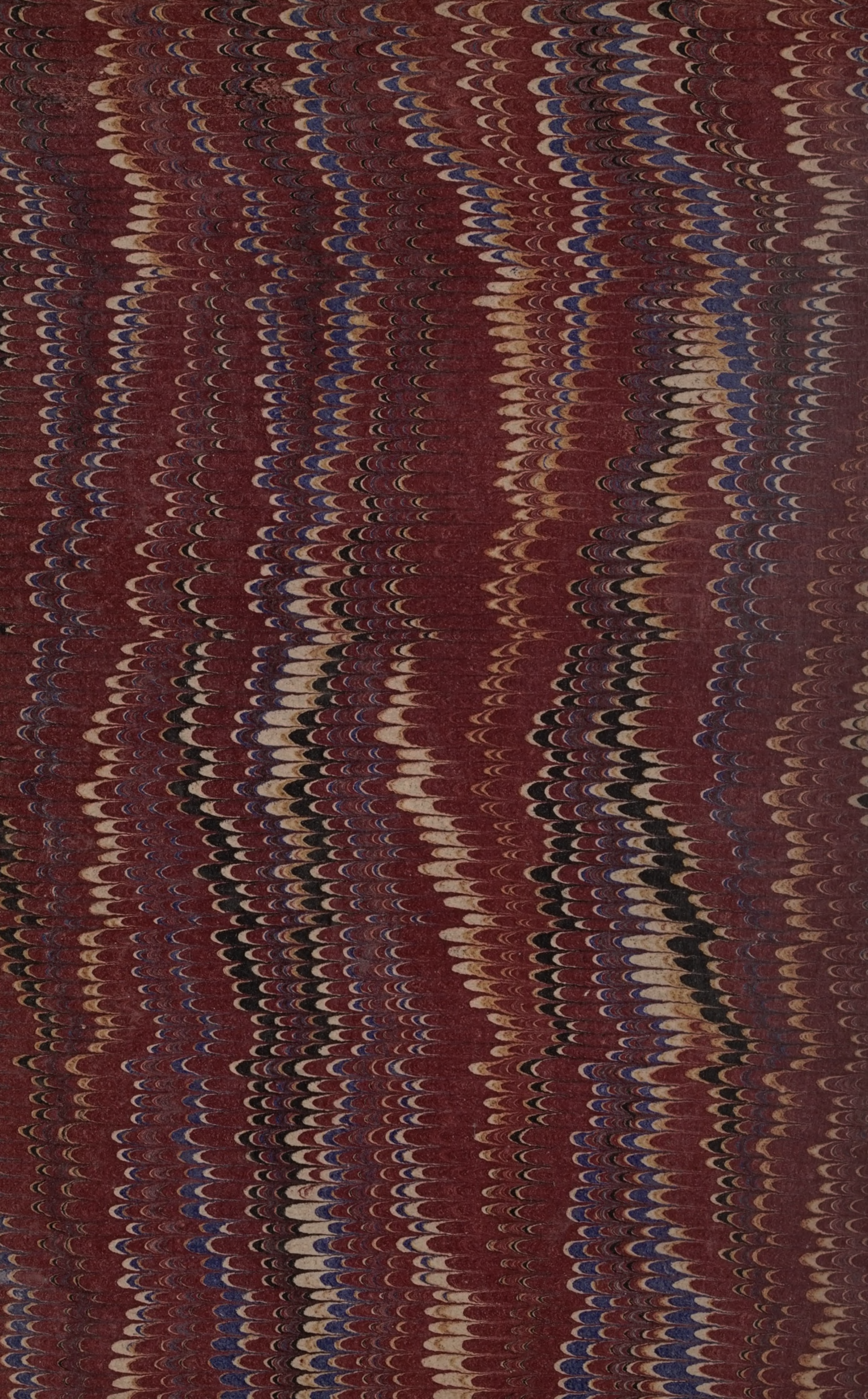
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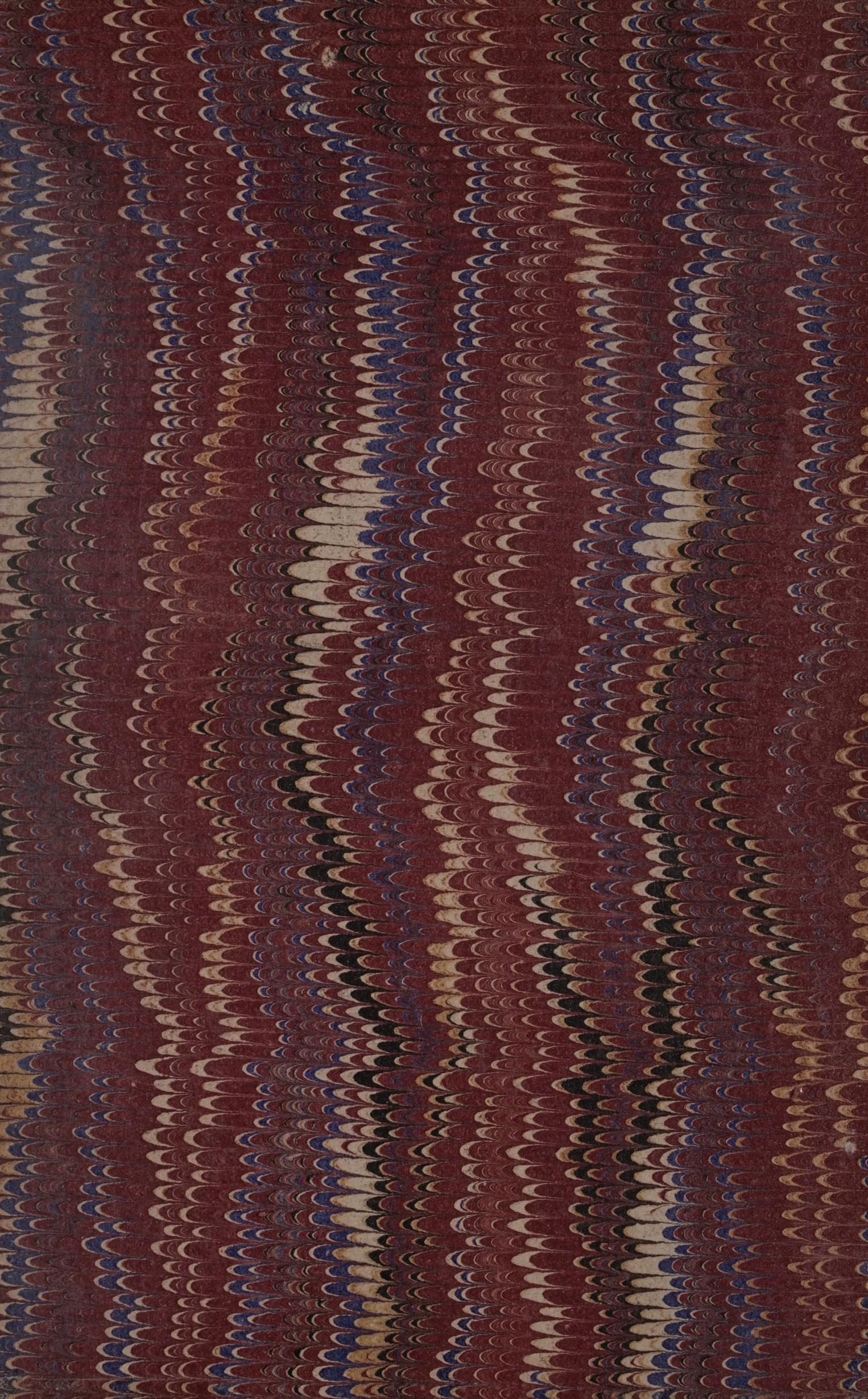
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